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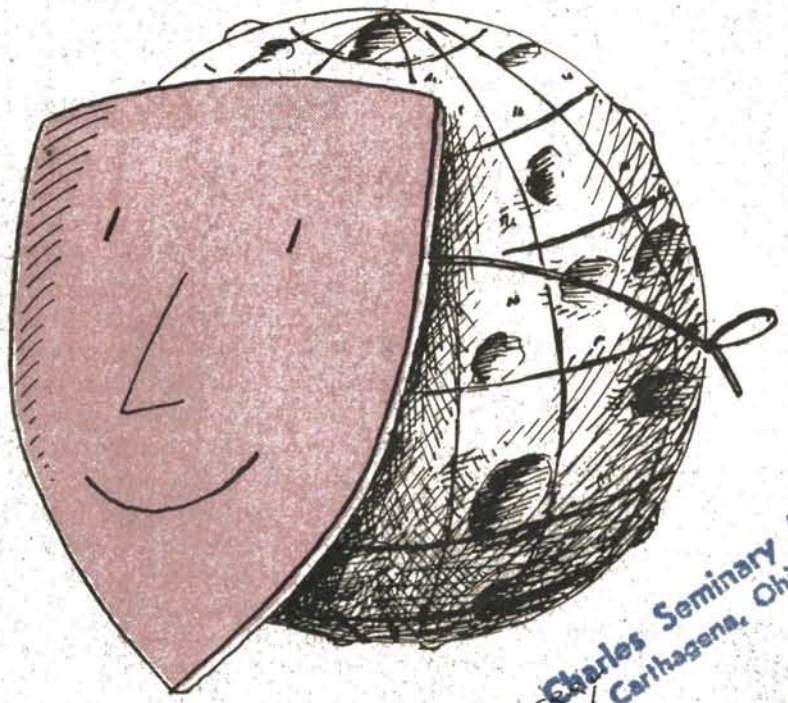

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Correspondence

Preparing revolution

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: The article "The Precarious Road" [June 20], on nonviolence in the Philippines does a powerful service to the cause of nonviolence and to the Catholic couple who have given their lives to the cause of Gospel nonviolence.

In her beautifully-written article, Peggy Rosenthal points to the experience of Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr in promoting the nonviolent response to injustice and oppression in Latin America. Even in an area where violent methods and responses seem to be endemic, they left an impression both on the hierarchy and laity.

At the end of 1984, they wrote to their friends among whom I am happy to be counted: "The nonviolent movement in the Philippines came to life in 1984." In only one year, they formed more than sixty base communities that try to live the radical love of the Gospel and are struggling for justice with this force. They coined a word for nonviolence: *Alaydalang* (offer dignity). It was the opposite of polarization. The offering of dignity and respect to the soldiers who confronted them with tanks helped the Philippine people achieve a change of regime without bloodshed.

The examples of the success of nonviolence in achieving social change show that crucial to such success is careful preparation. Gandhi's *Satyagraha* and the Philippine *Alaydalang* only worked because of such preparation. In each case, the acceptance rather than the infliction of suffering was a key concept. Cardinal Sin's appeal to resist "after the manner of Christ" provides an unforgettable moment in the witness of the church.

Hildegard and Jean Goss-Mayr were recipients of the Pope Paul VI Teacher of Peace Award at the 1986 National Assembly of Pax Christi, held at Emmanuel College in Boston in August.

EILEEN EGAN

Changing attitudes

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: Your editorial, "We the Americas" [June 20] effectively conveys both the spirit and the substance of the Inter-American Dialogue's recently released report on U.S.-Latin American relations. The central message of our report, as the article states, is that "it is time to rebuild cooperation in the Americas." But it is not just that cooperation is urgently needed to address critical hemispheric issues. The members of the Dialogue, who have been meeting regularly since 1982, also believe that a historic opportunity now exists to achieve such cooperation.

Latin America's democratic renewal provides a basis of shared values and purposes on which to build cooperative action. The region's democratic leaders are moderate and pragmatic, and they are already forging close relations among themselves. Through their participation in the Cartagena group, they are jointly seeking responses to the region's crises of debt, trade, and growth. Through their involvement and support for the Contadora process, they are trying to bring peace to Central America. If Contadora is successful, it will be a powerful precedent for collective action to resolve regional conflicts. These leaders want the assistance of the United States in confronting national and regional problems.

The opportunity for strengthening hemispheric cooperation reflects changing attitudes in the United States as well. The suggestions advanced by U.S. Treasury Secretary James Baker for dealing with international debt represented a new appreciation in Washington that Latin America's economic problems can only be alleviated through inter-American efforts. It is also increasingly understood in the United States that the drug trade must be addressed at both ends — through measures that will reduce demand as well as supply. It has been more difficult to gain U.S. cooperation — and that of Nicaragua — to end Central America's devastating wars, but all sides know that peace in that region will require regional accord.

Both the emerging opportunities and the pressing needs for greater hemispheric cooperation only underscore the deterioration that has taken place in the formal institutions of the inter-American system. All of us, North and South, should be troubled by the virtual collapse of the Organization of American States and many of its associated agencies. We must find the will to revive and strengthen the OAS before it is too late.

SOL M. LINOWITZ
Co-chairman,
Inter-American Dialogue

Disquieting dimension

Chestnut Hill, Mass.

To the Editors: In his sympathetic, but balanced article, "The Force of Cardinal Lustiger" [April 25], Steven Englund presents a fascinating personal portrait of the colorful, complex archbishop of Paris. Englund's broad understanding of the church in France, both as a historical institution and as a living reality, places the dynamic Cardinal Lustiger in full context.

Clearly, the unique personal background of the Jewish-Catholic prelate, his close ties with Pope John Paul II, and his pivotal position as archbishop of Paris mark Cardinal Lustiger as a key figure in the church both within France and abroad. Yet, there is a disquieting dimension to Cardinal Lustiger's leadership, which seems symptomatic of a broader "neo-orthodox" reaction emanating from Rome.

Most disconcerting is the seeming abandonment of the collegial concept of

(Continued on page 510)

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Commonweal

THE GREAT ECONOMIC RECOVERY

NO DISCUSSION OF the economy could be complete these days without the word "volatility." Volatility refers to the sharp ups and downs of the stock market, mostly the downs, since it is a more reassuring word than "panic." Volatility, it is cheerfully theorized, is only due to the lock-step of large investors all using the same sort of computer programs to plan their moves; presumably, volatility will be taken care of once the computer programs are clever enough to take into account all the other computer programs.

Not much else about the overall economy is volatile. There are, of course, good signs and bad signs, and all are probed like the entrails of Roman sacrifices. What is disturbing is not the sudden jumps and starts, but the persistent shuffle.

Six years ago the nation was told that the economy was going to be unleashed. It turned out we had to go through a wringer of a recession first. According to Isabel Sawhill and Charles Stone, that recession cost more than $3,300 per household in lost income during 1981-83. The costs, however, were far from evenly distributed. They meant "billions of dollars of lost income for workers who were jobless or had to accept shorter working hours or lower wages, as well as more bankruptcies and lower farm and business earnings." Working heads of poor families lost four to five times as much income during that period as did heads of high-income families. Poverty rolls swelled by 4.3 million people over 1981-82.

Then came recovery — the unleashing. What has come forth, however, is more like Old Bossie than a charging bull. "After six years," noted Senator Moynihan recently, "you can say nothing's changed." If volatility is a worry, that may be due to the sense that the economy is trudging forward on weak knees, and over increasingly slippery ground.

There are two exceptions to this picture of doleful continuity. One is inflation. It has been stopped almost dead in its tracks, reined in or, if you will, leashed. The other exception is debt. That is what has been truly unleashed. Instead of the balanced budget which supply-siders promised, the nation enjoys the largest federal deficit in its history. You can argue about the way in which that deficit is calculated and compared to past ones, or whether future deficits may not be quite as enormous as recently expected. In any case, that debt is now absorbing 14 percent of the federal budget — 40 percent of Washington's spending on goods and services. Interest on the debt comprised 7 percent of the budget in 1970 and 10 percent in 1980, even despite the soaring interest rates. (Reagan's pledge to cut the size of the government has not yet been fulfilled either: federal spending now equals 24 percent of the Gross National Product; under Carter, it was 21 percent.) Those who promised a balanced budget, and produced record deficits instead, then went on to "solve" the deficit problem with the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill, which, should it be belatedly inflicted on a sluggish economy, may well kick off another recession.

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Another recession will mean even more deficit, and a huge burden that will most likely inhibit effective anti-recession economic resuscitation.

If the deficit has not been catastrophic to date, it is in good measure due to the foreign capital attracted by high interest rates. That inflow transformed the U.S. from a supplier of capital to the world into one of the world's great debtor nations. The strong dollar also spurred the "other" deficit. Exports fell, imports grew, and despite the recent drop in the exchange value of the dollar, the trade balance appears still to be worsening. Consumer spending has been bobbing up and down; but with wages and median income stuck and housing costs way up, consumers can keep on buying only by increased borrowing. Household debt, not only in mortgages but especially in "plastic," has shot up to a ratio of 84 percent of real disposable income.

Neither stopping inflation nor unleashing debt has done anything for the nation's basic economic weaknesses. The savings rate — often underlined as the key justification for administration policies like the 1981 tax cut — has actually dropped, from 7.5 percent five years ago to less than 5 percent. Business investment has been similarly disappointing. And investment in "human capital," the preparation of a skilled work force appropriate to a flexible economy in a competitive, computerized era, has been greatly insufficient. Witness the continuing findings about educational shortcomings and the perpetuation of an "underclass" lacking work skills and job experience. Growth in productivity — another key factor — has shown only slight gains, not the real bound upward that was prophesized, and far less than the improvements in competing economies. Utilization of industrial capacity is below 80 percent, far less than usual at an advanced stage of the business cycle.

All this has taken its toll on the ordinary American's standard of living. Unemployment has dipped but remains unusually high for an economy that is not in recession. Same with poverty. In an illuminating article in *Dissent* (Summer, 1986), H. Brand has compared the average annual performance of the economy in its last two cyclical expansions, 1975-79 and 1982-85. Over the earlier expansion, 11.7 percent of the population fell under the poverty line; during the current one, the percentage is 14.4. Over the earlier expansion, an average of 5.8 percent of the civilian labor force was unemployed; during the later expansion, it's 7.1 percent. A July 13 article in the Sunday *New York Times* business section was bluntly headlined, "The Average Guy Takes It on the Chin." It noted that the momentum of postwar prosperity, which came to a grinding halt in the oil-shocked, inflationary seventies, has never been regained. Professor Frank S. Levy of the University of Maryland explained that a man who was thirty in 1949 would have seen his earnings increase by 63 percent by the time he was forty. A man turning thirty in 1973, however, would have seen his real average income actually decline over the next ten years. Home ownership now takes about twice the proportion of family income that it used to. Not surprisingly, home ownership among under-thirties has dropped since 1981. An August 18 article in *U.S. News & World Report* entitled "Middle-Class Squeeze" is another exploration of what has become familiar territory. Houses, cars — and having children — are becoming just too expensive for middle-income wage-earners; they purchase VCRs instead, or run up the aforementioned debts. Median family income has remained almost steady, but mainly because married women, including the majority with young children, have entered the paid labor force and added another paycheck to the family earnings.

The much-vaunted growth in jobs — admittedly an achievement that makes European nations jealous — is no magic cure either. Job creation has actually slowed in the eighties. More important, almost a third of the new jobs added to the economy since 1980 provide an average weekly wage less than the poverty level for a family of four. Another 60 percent of the new jobs were in service work that provide an average yearly income of $13,600. Audrey Freedman, labor economist at the Conference Board, has advanced the notion of "contingent" workers — employees who are either part-time, temporaries, self-employed, or hired by subcontractors. Such a work force can be taken on or dismissed by established firms at will. Employees of this sort get reduced benefits and little security. Ms. Freedman said that perhaps one-third of American workers fall into that category.

Not everyone is doing poorly in today's economy. The well-off are becoming even more so, and cities wouldn't be worrying about "gentrification" if there weren't some young gentry earning and spending enough to transform rooming houses into condos. The elderly certainly remain more secure than they were two decades ago, although they may be the next target for the campaign of rugged individualists against "unproductive" citizens. Every time the data collectors hold a mirror to the mouth of the economy, the foggy results show

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that the creature is still breathing. But for a "recovery," an "expansion," a rebirth of American vitality, and all that, this is a pretty disappointing spectacle at best, a harsh and inequitable one at worst, a downright precarious one in any case. Humorist Garrison Keillor tells of his fictional smalltown baseball team, the Lake Wobegone Whippets, who momentarily lurched from haplessness to win a few games and dreamed of breaking even for the season. They contemplated, Keillor said, the long uphill struggle toward mediocrity. That is not a bad image for the U.S. economy. Up from recession. Slouching toward mediocrity.

COURT CONUNDRUM

By the time this issue reaches readers, the U.S. Senate may well have confirmed the nomination of William Rehnquist as Chief Justice. Perhaps in the process someone will have noted an old logical conundrum tucked away in the debate. The conundrum was posed when Senator Paul Simon (D., Ill.) asked the nominee whether he, Rehnquist, would have voted to confirm a Court nominee with ideological views as fundamentally different from his own as Simon's are from Rehnquist's. It was a fascinating question because Rehnquist has always thought and acted on firm ideological grounds — and emphasized the results he valued over procedural principles that might stand in the way. Responding to Senator Simon, nominee Rehnquist hemmed and hawed but was honest enough not to dodge the only conclusion that one could reasonably draw from his remarks, his record, his writings: he would not hestitate to vote against a nomination as ideologically alien as was his own to Simon.

The conundrum? If senators with doubts about Rehnquist's ideology nonetheless are hesitant to vote against him on those grounds because they think he is an intelligent, technically competent justice, why shouldn't they simply abide by Rehnquist's own approach to the matter? Should you keep a man out of a club who wouldn't vote for himself as a member?

ON PAIN IN THE CHURCH

The Curran case, as well as recent events in Seattle and New York, prove it is both an interesting and perilous time to be an American Catholic. Those who attempt to understand these events, and who approach both the people and principles involved without predetermined sets of rigid categories, have discovered but one conclusion: there will be no easy answers in determining the full truth in these matters and what is one's responsibility toward them.

Anyone who looks beyond the headlines can sense the anguish that is afoot in the American church, notonly among those who have been proscribed and their supporters, but in the rank and file of American Catholics who are affected both by their loyalty to the universal church and by their respect for those of their own household who have attempted to grapple with the demands of the Gospel and its moral requirements in this specific time and place. (We exclude here those cynics — for such they are — on both sides of whatever question, who, strapped into their particular marching boots, are ready to sweep down and exult over any perceived foe's failures, weakness, or reproval. American Catholics who love the universal church feel a deep sadness, a revulsion at such wound-making.)

By its very nature, ecclesiastical authority in the Christian community is distinct from any other type of authority. To what might it be compared? To monarchy? To parliamentary democracy? To enlightened despotism? Clearly, to emulate any of these would be to have settled for something less than the church's specific nature.

Ecclesial authority rests not on the power of structures or privilege, but on the example of Jesus: "I have not come to be served but to serve" (cf. Matt. 20:28); "No longer do I call you servants but friends" (cf. John 15:15). Ecclesial authority is derived from the church's unique mission; to be Christ present in this very time. Such a mission — and such authority — are antithetical to all those structures and societies we generally find ourselves attached to or mired in. While it is evident the church must have a social structure to help it achieve its task, the church's nature is not merely that of a social structure. The church is rather "a spiritual communion that has a social structure" (Yves Congar, *The Word and the Spirit,* Harper & Row, p. 55).

It is the whole church, not just its officials, who are the body of Christ, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. It is the whole church that bears responsibility for carrying out the mission of Jesus, not just those dressed in purple or seated in the houses of princes, nor simply those holding university chairs. It is true, by virtue of their training, office, and gifts, these members bear a special accountability to the whole church and to the world. And it is no surprise that the standards raised in the common mind concerning them and the fulfillment of their duties are nothing less than exacting.

Catholics have a right to ask their theologians: Where are you taking us? Our families, our old ones, our children? Are these suggestions you are making going to weaken, or eventually shatter, this earthen vessel in which we carry our heart's treasure? The Gospel calls for a full, life-entailing response: Serve me with your whole heart, your whole mind, your whole body; and love your neighbor as yourself. It warns that whoever relaxes these commands will be called "least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17). A heavy responsibility. The duty of the theologian in particular is demanding: to make the Gospel vital in each new time while maintaining its challenging fullness.

To the hierarchical leaders the call is the same, but the reckoning is always particular. What example are you of the suffering Servant who eats with sinners, calls all to repent, and binds up wounds? Do you hear your people's anguish — are you near enough — or do you lay burdens on them too heavy for their shoulders? The hierarchical charism cannot fulfill its duty isolated from the rest of the church. The hierarchy, as Father Congar writes, "can only be certain of its real hierarchical charism within a communion of faith and love with the

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body, and in serving it." This calls for an immense effort. To attempt to achieve it at such times as these necessitates ingenuity and creative patience.

The events of recent months have raised real questions concerning the church's catholicity: the nature of that catholicity, and whether the church really desires to achieve it. It is important for the American bishops, following recent discussions of their 1968 criteria for dissent in the church, to ask what is the role of subsidiarity, the role of collegiality in the universal church? Have the American bishops given perhaps a tremendous gift to the church in those 1968 guidelines, a gift that should not be too quickly abandoned? Is rigorous conformity really the best and surest means for the unity of the church to be sought? How might we answer Baron von Hügel that "every living unity is constituted in multiplicity"? If we deny it, what can we say are the real prospects for the church?

Freedom and authority are two necessary poles. The tension between them maintains the church on its course. But especially in these times, "the traditional virtues of obedience and docility, important though they be, are no substitute for personal integrity and open dialogue" (Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church*, Oxford, p. 123). This presents us with a radical challenge: we are each called to become that very person God has in mind for us to be. The same goes for the Christian community: we are to settle for nothing less than to answer the living voice of God in our day.

The church is an authoritative community. The paradox is that it is authoritative precisely because the Holy Spirit resides in the whole community. In that sense, the church is the true exemplar of democracy. It realizes more profoundly than any political theory the dignity of each person and its perfection in community. Jesus's call is one of repentance and radical change from self-interest — whether individual or collective. At a time of unparalleled crises for this planet — when poverty debases the humanity of millions, when humanicide and ecocide threaten an apocalypse — Christians must ask themselves relentlessly what questions they should honestly be debating, and where their service should be directed. All times are perilous, perhaps ours the most perilous of all. But perilous times can be in God's wisdom moments of extraordinary grace.

HUNGARIAN OCTOBER

It is nearly *Hungarian October* — the time when dissidents in that country band together to celebrate the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, a revolution that failed to overthrow the Marxist government, which in turn imprisoned 5,800 revolution-supporters. This year's thirtieth anniversary preparations attest to the power of memory, the craving for freedom, and the need for international criticism of press censorship in the nation commonly considered by the West to be the most liberal of the Warsaw Pact. In Hungary —not only in a Chile under state of siege or in a South Africa under emergency powers — it is the approaching anniversary that has given the government cause to step up its restrictions on authors, editors, and lyricists.

There are no known dissident writers in prison in Hungary, according to "The Limits of Liberalization," a report issued by PEN American Center. But, PEN says, the liberal treatment of the press surrounding last fall's Helsinki Accord Cultural Forum in Budapest was a "deceptive lull" in the harassment that daily dogs Hungarian writers. As of September 1, press restrictions, codified for the first time, specify that only officially recognized institutions which are granted permission from the proper authorities may legally publish books, periodicals, and plays. Meanwhile, the number of raids on apartments, confiscations of manuscripts, passport/visa denials or pressures on dissidents to emigrate, fines of up to two-months salary, and dismissals from jobs have increased. Possession, as well as the publication, of unofficial literature is a crime.

For those who have lost their jobs as a result of public dissent, the pressure is twofold: another new statute allows forced labor to be meted out to anyone not holding a "regular" job for one month or longer; work as a full-time writer may not qualify as regular employment.

Writers who regularly publish samizdat have their work refused by government publishing houses even when it meets official criteria. This discrimination is known as "silentium." The bulk of writers, however, publish officially, observing self-censorship and submitting to a sort of "gentleman's agreement" not to criticize the regime directly. For them the new laws have augmented contempt for the government as well as confusion. Istvan Eorsi of the official writers' union publicly called for the establishment of "explicit rules for what writers could write so they would know clearly what they could and couldn't say and so that censorship would be exercised over texts and not over authors." This was, of course, said with irony. No text ever feared for its job.

The censorship laws cut across categories of writing as diverse as punk rock songs and theology. Ignac Kiraly and Jozsef Merza, for instance, possessed 110 theology books published by Catholic base communities. All were confiscated; both people were fined. PEN reports that although nineteen religious denominations are permitted to publish their own materials in Hungary, the base communities were restricted "because they are not controlled by trusted hierarchy." In a country where Cardinal Mindszenty was persecuted in face of international outrage, this, too, has an irony.

Why does simple harassment in Hungary deserve concern when the tortured bodies of editors and reporters are being deposited by belligerent governments elsewhere around the globe? Vilmos Sos convinces us: "Everybody said Hungary was relatively free, we have not such big problems as the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. It is partly true, of course. I said, 'What is the meaning of relatively free? Would that freedom be enough for you?' "

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Of several minds: *John Garvey*

TOLERANCE LIMITS

PORNOGRAPHY & THE RISKS OF CENSORSHIP

THE RECENT report of the attorney general's commission on pornography caused a lot of shallow commentary from liberals and conservatives, and made me think that in this area of our shared life — the area, that is, where we look at and write about sexual things, where we try to make distinctions between good and bad taste, the legitimately erotic and the illegitimately pornographic — few people have done a particularly good job of being clear about a difficult but very important and obviously very interesting subject. Too often the legitimate objections of the other side (whichever side you are on) are ignored, and it is easy to see why: those objections are themselves wrapped in fuzz. I am not sure that anything said here will contribute to clarity, but there are some questions surrounding the issue which aren't raised often enough.

The American impulse is to turn morality into law. This may be an aspect of our Puritan heritage, but I don't care where it comes from — it is a stupid response, except in extreme cases. We do in fact legislate those aspects of morality which are necessary for keeping us from one another's throats. Laws against torture, rape, and murder have to do with morality, in the sense that it is immoral to do any of these things. But they also have to do with the maintenance of social order, as do laws against speeding and drunk driving. A law which does not allow me to play poker or which forbids the sale of drinks on the sabbath, on the grounds that card playing and drinking are shady and immoral activities, is arguably of a different order. It certainly is, in a pluralistic society, where tolerance is a civic necessity, if not a civic virtue.

Tolerance of diversity is essential to a pluralistic society, but it is not at all clear where one person's behavior moves over the border of a neighbor's tolerance limit. In some places laws have been passed, and in many other places laws have been suggested, which make it illegal to display pornographic magazines openly; their covers must themselves be covered. The point made by defenders of this sort of legislation seems to me a decent one. It is one thing to say that a person has a right to publish pornographic material and that others have a right to buy it; it is another thing altogether to force me to see it when I walk into a store to buy a cup of coffee or the morning paper. Here one right collides with another, and the most civil solution may be for me to allow a neighbor who covets what Tom Wolfe has felicitously called "one-hand magazines" to buy and read them at will, as long as he does not force me or the neighborhood kids or anybody else to look at them unwillingly.

A more complicated situation arises in cases where groups, often from fundamentalist churches, threaten boycotts of stores which sell such materials. Like previously threatened boycotts of television shows, this has brought forward charges of censorship. Although I am not happy with tactics which come close to being threats, I think the charges brought by such obviously self-interested people as Hugh Hefner and Bob Guccione that these boycotts pose a threat to all of our freedoms are very close to the tobacco lobby's similar concerns for democracy.

How is this morally or legally different from the boycott of California grapes? You may not agree that a chain of stores should not stock *Playboy* or *Penthouse*; if so, you are free to patronize those stores, just as you are free to patronize stores which stock a product that the unions claim is exploitive of workers. You are also free to buy the products advertised on a television show which upset fundamentalists. By the same token, people who have a strong moral objection to what a store sells or a television show advertises have every right to make it clear, as forcefully as they like, to the owners of a chain of stores or a network that they will not patronize those stores or that network's advertisers — as long as they do not interfere with the rights of others to do so.

A picket line protesting the presence of *Playboy* and *Penthouse* is not in and of itself any more offensive to democratic ideals than a picket line protesting the sale of non-union table grapes. This is not to equate the two causes. It is rather a question of freedom of expression, and we must recognize that Hefner and Guccione are as self-interested as the people who don't want farmworkers' unions to succeed. If a chain of stores caves in for reasons of cowardice, that is not censorship. It is cowardice. Let the porn people mount their counter-campaign. For every letter protesting porn, write one defending it. It's messy, but a free society always is.

Some of the messiness is revealed in the responses to one of the commission's assertions — that there is a link between violent pornography and violence against women. There is some circumstantial evidence for this, and it comes from law enforcement people who find that sexual offenders are usually avid readers of porn. But there is also some counter-evidence, and it leads to some interesting questions. In Japan, for example, violent pornography is a common and socially accepted thing. It is much more prevalent there than here. Yet in Japanese society, there is also a much lower rate of violent crime, of a sexual or any other nature.

This fact, no doubt, has to do with complex cultural factors here and there which no one understands very well. The responses to the commission's assertion of a link between pornography and violence, however, show something of the limitation of our society's ability to respond, within limits which we have agreed upon for very good reasons, to something which may truly be a social problem.

One argument goes like this: pornog-

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raphy is degrading, and there must be a link between the desires it arouses and the damage done to women in subtle and overtly violent ways. Another argument: pornography is not degrading to those women who participate voluntarily in its production, but is a matter of taste. If it has any effect at all, it is a good one: people unable to satisfy weird tastes through fantasy might take them out on women in fact. Still another argument: even if pornography is degrading and might have potentially damaging effects, unless those effects can be more clearly demonstrated than they have been, it is better, in a democracy, to take the risks involved in the free expression of even disgusting ideas than it is to try to censor them.

It is necessary, in a pluralist society, to demonstrate that something causes a fairly obvious social harm, one more or less apparent to the mass of people, before you set out to ban it. Even then an absolute ban, rather than a milder limitation of access, is a chilling possibility. I am glad that this pragmatic approach is considered necessary and that our instincts tend to be against any censorship. I would rather live in a society which tolerates pornographers, as well as fundamentalists, atheists, and flat-earthers. It is safer for all of us because — in theory, anyway — it keeps any one bunch of people from imposing its ideas on the rest of us.

There is a long way, though, from this defense of democratic tolerance to the belief that, because it is good to tolerate some bad things rather than fight them in ways which may come back to haunt us, pornography is therefore harmless. The tolerance of pornography can be defended on the same grounds as the tolerance of racist theories: the alternative to tolerance is dangerous in a constitutional democracy. One of democracy's greatest virtues is negative. When used as it should be, democracy can prevent the development of tyrannical monopolies, including that of state power itself. But there is a form of tolerance which comes close to proclaiming all ideas equal, since everyone has a right to have whatever ones he or she likes, and your taste for Plato and your neighbor's for porn (for all I know those preferences may be reversed) become not only politically but in some vague way morally equivalent.

THIS is not just fuzzy thinking, though it is that. Ours is a society which can think only in political terms, in which all but the political is subjective, personal, and therefore a matter of taste. A society which has no common philosophical or moral or religious heritage will drift this way, and it is not a good thing. Nor would it be a good thing if such a common culture were to be imposed. What happens as a result of our greyness here, however, is not at all simple, because no one really does believe that all ideas are equal. The person who believes that the depersonalized sex to be found in pornography can have no negative effect is not likely to believe that violently anti-Semitic or anti-Black or anti-Asian sentiments will have no effect. And it is obviously foolish to think that culture can have beneficial effects, that it is good for people to be exposed to Shakespeare and Dante and George Eliot and the paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe, but that it will have no negative effect whatsoever to expose people to images of women being subjected to various forms of sexual humiliation or violence.

You really can't have it both ways. Art — obviously defined broadly here — has effects, both positive and negative. Advertisers do not pay millions of dollars to create series of images which have no effect. You don't have to agree with some of the legal tactics suggested by those feminists who oppose pornography to agree with them that its presence is disturbing, and exploitive, and has terrible social effects. Persuasion — even of the sort, maybe especially of the sort, that makes Hefner and Guccione uncomfortable — is probably the better way than legislation.

But I have a couple of final questions which move the issue of dehumanization and exploitation beyond the area of pornography into a wider and more troubling place. The first is this: is it possible, in a society which has chosen pluralism over the imposition of a uniform philosophy or religion, to speak not mainly of rights but of our obligations to one another? The concept of rights is necessarily individualistic and sets up separate spheres of influence, within which the persons with variously defined rights are sovereign. The question of pornography, however, is one of those which involves not only the right of women not to be looked at primarily as objects which exist for the satisfaction of male desire; it also has to do with the obligation of men not to regard women in this way. The concept of rights is important, but limited.

The second question is why this particular form of dehumanization causes so much more of an uproar than the other forms of dehumanization all around us. The erotic is transformed into the pornographic by the process of dehumanization and anonymity, a reduction of something human and complex into something used for effect, something much less than we are meant to be. A similar reduction of people happens frequently in business, in politics, and especially in advertising. This is not to say that it always does. But when a person becomes less compassionate because it is expected by an employer; or when a complex issue involving the lives of millions of people is deliberately oversimplified so that someone can gain power at the political level; or when something as important as the love of parents for children or the loneliness of the old is made part of a commercial pitch (which is almost always the attempt to create a desire where there was not one before, the creation of a false need); when these elements of dehumanization are parts of our lives, we are in the presence of something which is as dangerous as pornography, and is part of the same illusory, distorted way of seeing the world. Maybe this pervasive dehumanization is even more dangerous. Pornography is obvious. It has the saving grace of creating some guilt in a lot of its fans, who tend to look shy when purchasing it and get embarrassed when caught with it. We can agree that pornography is outrageous, or we can get defensive about it — but that's all such easy, self-satisfying argumentation. The other stuff is so much a part of the air we breathe that we don't see it, even though we're dying of it.

JOHN GARVEY

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A JEW LOOKS AT CATHOLIC-JEWISH RELATIONS

The Vatican, Israel, & 'holy Zion'

F.G. FRIEDMANN

DURING THE LAST quarter of a century, and particularly during the last three or four years, the Catholic church has made great efforts to amend its traditional position toward the Jews and Judaism. This is evident in both specific papal pronouncements and in actions by ecclesiastical bodies. Two major issues come immediately to mind.

First, the accusation of deicide, of the Jewish participation in the killing of Christ. Here the traditional position has been radically modified. The "Notes for the Correct Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church" (issued June 1985) declare that Christians are more responsible for the death of Christ than the Jews because "we [Christians] sin knowingly," a formulation which raises its own new and awkward questions.

Second, the traditional view that the Old Testament revelation has been superseded by the New. Here, too, there has been a shift in thought. During his visit to the Jewish community of Mainz in 1980, John Paul II spoke of "the people of God of the Old Covenant, which has never been revoked." A similar idea is expressed in the "Notes": "The permanence of Israel (while so many ancient peoples have disappeared without a trace) is a historic fact and a sign to be interpreted within God's design . . ." Again, in his April 13, 1986 address to the Roman synagogue, the pope pointed out that "each of our religions . . . wishes to be recognized and respected in its own identity, beyond any syncretism and any ambiguous appropriations," for "the Lord will judge each one according to his works, Jews and Christians alike."

These statements do not deny that Jews and Catholics have different tasks in the world. Israel "remains a chosen people," while the church "must of her nature proclaim Jesus Christ to the world" ("Notes"). But they do force Catholics to ponder the question: What might be God's design for the continuing presence of the Jewish people?

How do these shifts in traditional Catholic positions present themselves to me, a Jew who is not a representative of any Jewish organization, but simply a private person?

I wonder what effect the magisterium of the church has on the "praxis" of its followers. History offers little consolation. Eugene Fisher, executive secretary of the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, has pointed out that "forced baptisms" of Jews were performed in the Middle Ages, though prohibited by canon law, and that the four discriminating canons against Jews issued by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) "were disciplinary laws only and did not have doctrinal significance" ("The Evolution of a Tradition: From *Nostra Aetate* to the 'Notes' " in: *Christian Jewish Relations*, Volume 18, Number 4). And in a recent poll taken in the Austrian Tyrol, where veneration of Andrea of Rinn as a victim of ritual murder was forbidden by Pope John XXIII, 24 percent of the population still refuse to shake hands with a Jew.

I also wonder about the church's motivation, whether the changed doctrinal attitude toward Judaism and the Jews is not in great part due to the confluence of historical events. I am thinking particularly of the Holocaust and of today's dangers to human survival.

Other questions have consistently been raised as well. A number of representatives of Jewish organizations, for example, have criticized church authorities for inadequately addressing such questions as the recognition of the State of Israel and the significance of the Holocaust. As to the State of Israel, one should keep in mind that the church's recent consultations were primarily carried out with the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations. Of the twenty-two members of that committee who participated in the last meeting (October 1985), twenty were diaspora-Jews, of whom thirteen were rabbis. Their primary concern must have been the relationship between Judaism and Jews, on the one hand, and Catholicism and Catholics on the other hand.

But concerning Jewish attachment to the *land* of Israel or the city of Jerusalem, recent statements by the church speak clearly. John Paul II said in 1984 that "Jews love her (Jerusalem) and in every age venerate her memory, abundant

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as she is in many remains and monuments from the time of David who chose her as the capital, and of Solomon who built the temple there." The "Notes" speak of the Jews' "memory of the land of their forefathers at the heart of their hope" and invite Christians to "understand this religious attachment which finds its roots in biblical tradition" or (as the U.S. bishops put it in 1975) "this link between land and people which Jews have expressed in their writings and worship as a longing for the homeland, holy Zion."

ON THE other hand, I do not believe it necessary to identify "holy Zion," the Zion at the end of all time, with the present State of Israel. In fact, the present State of Israel, shaped as it is after the model of the European nation-state at the turn of the century, does not seem to me to do full justice to the comprehensive character of Judaism and Jewish history.

I do not regard it as a sign of disrespect for the achievements of the present State of Israel to point out that a Jewish state or state-like entity (the stages of which are described in the Hebrew Bible) existed only during one-third of the total history of the Jewish people, and that this state was totally independent from foreign powers (Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman) for only half of that period.

The U.S. bishops are correct in noting that "Jews have always considered themselves as a peoplehood that is not solely racial, ethnic, or religious, but in a sense a composite of all three" and that "It is for such reasons that an overwhelming majority of Jews see themselves bound in one way or another to the land of Israel." One such way is certainly to accept God's saying "the land is mine" which evidently means that it never was the natural possession of the Jewish tribes, but was promised to the Jewish people as a reward for the fulfillment of the laws of God. The Jewish people did not originate like other peoples in close contact with a land whose gods they worshipped, but through God's call to Abraham and God's gift of the commandments to Moses.

Furthermore, the Jews were "a people without a country" during times when some of the most important events and developments of their history took place: the life of the patriarchs and of Moses, the activities of prophets such as Ezekiel or Jeremiah, the rabbinical literature, medieval philosophy, the mystic movements, Yiddish literature, as well as the Jewish achievements in the modern sciences and arts. And were not most of the great prophets critics of the rulers of the ancient State of Israel, pointing out what they regarded as the Jews' real mission? "A numerous Diaspora," we read in the "Notes," "allowed Israel to carry in the world a witness — often heroic — of its fidelity to the only God and to exalt him in the presence of all the living."

No doubt, today's State of Israel is less an outgrowth of basic Jewish beliefs (e.g. in the kingdom of God) than the consequence of historical contingencies such as the pogroms of Eastern Europe and the Holocaust through Nazi Germany: modern Israel was conceived of as a place of refuge for those whose lives were endangered. Like any nation-state it seeks to acquire and to defend secure borders. Like most nation-states it is embroiled in wars against other states and nationalities. Like other nation-states it sacrifices ethics for supposed security — as when it furnishes arms to racist South Africa. One may rightly ask whether the large emigration of Jews from Israel in recent years is not due to the recognition that in our world of resurgent nationalisms and of atomic power a small state like Israel, despite its high degree of militarization, is unable to offer the security originally sought by its citizens.

The issue of diplomatic recognition of the State of Israel by the Vatican raises a number of questions. Outside Israel exists a vast Jewish diaspora which will not disappear in the foreseeable future. There is, and will continue to be, an intricate relationship between the diaspora and the State of Israel. Israel cannot exist without continuous massive help from the diaspora, in particular from the United States. At the same time, many disaspora-Jews receive a considerable boost to their self-confidence from the existence of Israel. How will the Vatican deal with this twofold aspect of contemporary Judaism? Will it continue to confer with the International Liaison Committee as far as diaspora-Jews are concerned, while cultivating contacts with Israeli diplomats in matters referring to the State of Israel?

Secondly, a number of difficulties are likely to arise because there are no correlative structures or functions between the Vatican and the State of Israel. In both states the relationship of religion and politics plays an important role, yet these relationships are radically different. The Vatican is the seat of the highest authority of the Catholic church as well as its administrative center. Citizens of the Vatican are only those who have a specific function in that state. Israel is a secular state dominated by Jews. Every Jew in the world could become a citizen of that state, though it is the state which ultimately defines who is a Jew. The diplomatic recognition of a state by the Vatican serves primarily the religious interests of Catholics living in that state. The same is not true of Israel. Its diplomatic representatives abroad mainly promote the security of the State of Israel and the interests of its citizens.

What reasons can there be for the Vatican and Israel to establish mutual diplomatic relations? Vatican recognition of the State of Israel could not militarily or economically help to create secure frontiers; it could constitute only a moral boost by emphasizing the righteousness of the Zionist cause. However, would such an action be wise considering the Vatican's task of safeguarding the interests of Catholics living in the vast Muslim world? Recognition could only be justified if it were linked to a clear policy of persuading Israel to greater efforts in achieving peace with its Muslim neighbors (such as accepting the borders existing before the war of 1967). The distinction between the religious relationship of the church and the Jewish people and possible political ties of the Vatican and the State of Israel is recognized in this statement from the "Notes": "the existence of the State of Israel and its political options should be envisaged not in a perspective which is in itself religious, but in reference to the common principles of international law."

Concerning the Holocaust it is true that, with few excep-

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tions, the hierarchy of the Catholic church was slow and cautious in reacting to what the Nazis did to the Jews. It was likewise slow and cautious in expressing its regrets once the ordeal was over. I do not exclude the possibility that this attitude contributed to the decline in the church's prestige and influence in a number of European countries. On the other hand, I doubt whether Jewish demands for ever new confessions of guilt by the Christian churches are useful today. Suffering does not necessarily ennoble the victim. Certainly, the fact that a great many diaspora-Jews closed their eyes to the treatment of Palestinians at the hands of Israeli authorities precludes any claim to moral superiority. Furthermore, the specific problems of theodicy and of the nature of sin and evil which arose as a consequence of the Holocaust, should, I believe, be left to the theologians: to the Catholic ones who speak of "God after Auschwitz," and to the Jewish ones who speak of the "hidden God" and of "holy secularity."

Finally, we should welcome certain statements by church authorities: "The people of God of the Old and the New Testament are tending towards a like end in the future: the coming or the return of the Messiah — even if they start from two different points of view" ("Notes"); or the "Jewish and Christian tradition, founded on the Word of God, is aware of the human person, the image of God. Love of the same God must show itself in effective action for the good of mankind" ("Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*"); or "We must also accept our responsibility to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah by working together for social justice, respect for the rights of persons and nations, and for social and international reconciliation" ("Notes").

What is conspicuously missing from these statements, however, is any mention of the problem of human survival — the negative consequences of technological "progress." Each of us is aware today that the hubris of *one* race caused the genocide of gypsies and Jews, as well as the suffering and deaths of unknown numbers of dissenters. Are we equally aware of the possibility that the hubris of the industrialized part of the human race — represented by the ideologies of unlimited competition and search for success — may lead to the suicide of humankind as a whole? In the light of this possibility, is it enough that Christians and Jews recognize a common religious patrimony or that we consider, as did Franz Rosenzweig, Christianity and Judaism as two forms of salvation history? Is it not necessary that Christians and Jews, regardless of their unhappy relationship in the past or their different religious conceptions, combine their efforts to overcome the absolute rule of instrumental reason in favor of a *ratio* enlightened by faith? The adversary at this moment for Christians and Jews is not each other's religious tradition and belief but the hubris of the modern mind after its renunciation of God.

MULTILATERAL LOANS & U.S. POLICY

Subsidizing Pinochet

PETER HAKIM

IT'S THE law. The International Financial Institutions Act (Public Law 95-118), governs United States participation in seven international organizations, including the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, that were established by the U.S. and other governments to promote economic development world-wide. Section 701 of the Act, approved in 1976, requires U.S. representatives to those multilateral lending agencies to oppose assistance to countries whose governments "engage in a pattern of gross violations of internationally-recognized human rights." Exception is made only for assistance that serves basic human needs.

If there is any government to which Section 701 is meant to apply, it is the government of Chile. When Congress enacted this legislation, it was with the Pinochet dictatorship specifically in mind. Despite years of protest in Chile, and earlier this month a serious attempt on General Pinochet's life, that dictatorship appears still firmly entrenched.

The pattern of human rights abuses that has characterized the Pinochet regime since it took power in 1973 is well known. It has been documented in report after report by private and official human rights agencies — including the annual reports of the U.S. State Department. In the past year alone, both the Organization of American States and the United Nations have issued extensive reports on human rights violations in Chile — including torture, illegal executions, disappearances, mass arrests, and arbitrary imprisonment.

A particularly ugly manifestation of Chilean government brutality occurred this past July. Chilean soldiers doused two teenage protestors with gasoline and set them on fire. Both

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were subsequently denied adequate treatment. One of them, Rodrigo Rojas de Negri of Washington, D.C., died. The other, Carmen Gloria Quintana, remains in critical condition in a Chilean hospital. Shocking and outrageous, but not surprising if one follows events in Chile.

There is an open and shut case for applying Section 701 to Chile. If the U.S. government fails to do so, Section 701 is clearly ineffective, an example of counter-productive legislation. For as long as such legislation remains unenforced, it conveys a weak U.S. commitment to human rights.

There are two important questions to ask about the application of Section 701 to Chile. First, what is the economic significance of multilateral development bank loans for the Chilean economy and for the Chilean people? And second, would U.S. opposition to these loans contribute to real political change in Chile?

Multilateral bank loans are critically important to Chile's economy. Loans from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) assumed a key role in the country's economy following the emergence of the debt crisis in 1982. Before that, Chile's external financial needs were met almost entirely by massive borrowing from commercial banks. In the years since, the availability of commercial credit for Chile has plummeted. Chile is now dependent on multilateral loans for needed external financing.

In 1981, Chile borrowed $3.3 billion from private banks. By 1985, Chile could secure only $750 million in similar commercial loans, and this year the amount will drop to less than $400 million. In contrast, multilateral bank loans to Chile, which totaled only $130 million in 1981, soared to $1.1 billion by 1985.

In the past year, Chile has begun slowly to emerge from its worst economic depression since the 1930s. From 1982 to 1985, the country's per capita income dropped by 10 percent, to the level it was twenty years earlier. Today, economic recovery in Chile requires multilateral loans.

Chile's outstanding foreign debt is now approximately $20 billion, one of the two highest per capita in Latin America. The country's yearly interest bill is nearly $2 billion, equal to approximately 50 percent of its export earnings — a percentage greater than all but for two Latin American countries.

After paying interest obligations, Chile is left with precious little foreign exchange for imports. In 1985, for example, Chile's imports were only 40 percent of what they had been in 1981. Without its $1.1 billion in multilateral bank loans in 1985, Chile would have had to slash imports by another third to remain current on its debt obligations. Shortages of imported spare parts, equipment, raw material, and intermediary goods are already a major bottleneck to domestic production.

Multilateral bank loans have been crucial to the success of Chile's continuing debt negotiations with private banks. These multilateral loans facilitated a major debt rescheduling package in 1985 that was worth nearly $2 billion to Chile.

Multilateral bank loans are thus critical to Chile: they allow the country to maintain imports vital to its economy; they are essential for economic growth; and they help keep Chile in good standing with the international financial community.

In the coming months, decisions will be made on $800 to $900 million in new multilateral loans for Chile. If these loans are not approved, Chile's economy will suffer, causing increased hardships for all Chileans — rich and poor alike.

The fact is, however, the economic situation of the great majority of Chileans is already bleak, and is likely to remain so until there is a change of regime in the country. Since Pinochet took power, economic policy, in good times and bad, has discriminated against workers and low-income groups generally. The distribution of income and wealth in Chile is far more skewed today than it was when the military took charge. Average wage levels are lower today than they were in 1970. The minimum wage is 80 percent of what is was then.

No country in Latin America has been plagued with higher levels of unemployment. The official unemployment rate reached nearly 20 percent in 1983 — and another 11 percent of the labor force were enrolled in government make-work programs that pay $20 to $40 per month. The unemployment rate is now about 15 percent, with another 7 percent or so in the make-work programs. But even as employment has improved, wages continue to fall. Those without jobs are concentrated among the country's lowest paid workers. In the shanty towns of Santiago, which house about one-third of the city's population, unemployment remains in excess of 50 percent.

Under the Pinochet regime, the Chilean people — particularly the poor — have little hope for real economic improvement for themselves, their families, or their children. Economic progress for the mass of Chilean people will remain foreclosed until the return of democratic rule — when labor unions are allowed freely to organize and represent workers, when Chileans can openly press their demands through voice and vote, and when they can once again participate in government. Democracy is not a panacea. It cannot guarantee economic welfare and social equity. But for most Chileans, it is the only hope for a better life.

The United States does not exercise a veto power over multilateral loans — to Chile or to any other country. In fact, since 1975 every loan on which the United States either abstained or voted against was eventually approved. But more often than not, strong early U.S. opposition to a loan will prevent it from being brought forward, or even requested in the first place. In the four years of the Carter administration, only eight loans to Chile (totaling $211 million) came to a vote. But in President Reagan's first term, seventeen loans for $1.7 billion were approved.

If the United States made it clear that it intended to enforce Section 701, fewer loans would be proposed and processed. Those that are brought forward would more likely be addressed to basic human needs — which might at least benefit the majority of Chileans. Only 10 to 15 percent of the loans in the past five years fell into the human needs category.

What would be the political effect of U.S. opposition to multilateral loans to Chile? Would it hasten the fall of Pinochet? Would it help move Chile toward elections and democracy? Would it, at least, promote greater respect for

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human rights in an authoritarian Chile?

What the United States says and does with regard to Chile is taken extremely seriously by Chileans — inside and outside of government. Washington's words and actions are given wide attention by the Chilean media, and they do exert political influence in Chile. International loans are a particularly serious matter.

If the United States wants to make its influence felt, it must convey a clear and consistent message to the Pinochet government and to the Chilean people. There is no question that, in the past year, the White House has distanced itself from the Pinochet regime. Administration officials have expressed growing impatience with the lack of any progress toward a democratic transition.

Ambassador Harry Barnes, who replaced a U.S. envoy regarded by many Chileans as an apologist for Pinochet, has made it abundantly clear where he stands. This March, the United States — for the first time since 1981 — not only endorsed, but initiated a United Nations resolution condemning human rights violations in Chile. President Reagan himself has criticized "entrenched military rule." Statements from the administration following the burning of Rodrigo Rojas have been strong in their condemnation of the Pinochet regime and in their calls for a return to democratic rule.

The message should be getting through. But whatever impact it may be having will surely be blunted if the United States were to deny the applicability of Section 701 to Chile and were to vote in favor of critical bank loans. Nothing would reassure the Pinochet government more, or be of greater disappointment to the country's democratic opposition. If, to the contrary, the United States not only voted against but actively lobbied against the loans, the message would be reinforced.

It would be heard most loudly by Chile's conservative business and financial community, the last stronghold of civilian support for Pinochet. Pinochet simply could not maintain the backing of these groups if it were clear that he stood in the way of new loans and that his continued intransigence threated their economic interests.

The message would also be heard by key members of the armed forces. Discord within the military has been muted so far, but there have been some dissenting voices — particularly on the extension of Pinochet's rule beyond 1989. So far, Pinochet has been able to count on the unquestioned fealty of the army — the branch of the armed forces that ultimately will decide Chile's future. But even that loyalty would be tested by sustained U.S. pressure for change, reinforced by the real danger of economic deterioration.

The United States could send even stronger signals to the Chilean military by ending its participation in joint maneuvers; by ceasing further sales of military equipment or supplies; by halting plans for the construction of an emergency landing strip for shuttle flights on Chile's Easter Island; and by sharply reducing military-to-military relations. There must be no misunderstanding of the United States's position that a serious democratic transition must begin now.

TESTIFYING before Congress on July 30, Assistant Secretary of State Elliot Abrams stated that if a vote on multilateral loans to Chile were held, he would recommend that the United States oppose such loans. Disquieting, however, was his plea to Congress to allow the administration "flexibility" in deciding how the U.S. actually votes on the nearly $1 billion scheduled for final review this fall. Those loans are already in an advanced stage of negotiation. They will almost certainly be approved — no matter how the U.S. votes — unless the White House begins now seriously to mobilize the opposition of other countries.

The best immediate strategy for the U.S. would be to initiate an effort to have consideration of all multilateral loans to Chile postponed for at least six months. U.S. influence within the international financial institutions, if we choose to use it, is doubtless sufficient to produce such a postponement.

Washington should make clear to the Chilean government and the Chilean people what it is doing and why. It should also make clear that, unless those responsible for the killing of Rodrigo Rojas are brought to justice, unless human rights abuses are eliminated and concrete measures are taken toward a democratic transition, the United States will continue to use its leverage to keep the loans on hold. This would provide Pinochet and his backers with real incentive for change.

U.S. opposition to further multilateral loans to Chile cannot be an isolated gesture. It must be part of an overall strategy by the U.S. to help promote human rights and restore democracy to Chile. The U.S. cannot and should not determine the course of Chilean politics. The task of undoing the Pinochet regime belongs to the Chileans. But the U.S. can buttress their efforts by standing unambiguously for human rights, free elections, and democratic renewal in Chile.

Pinochet has now held power for thirteen years. He has dealt

JUST DAYS before the thirteenth anniversary of the bloody coup that brought him to power, General Augusto Pinochet became the target of a guerrilla attempt on his life. The government's reaction was swift — and characteristically brutal and indiscriminate. A state of siege was reimposed on the country. Respected leaders of the democratic opposition, none of whom was remotely implicated in the assassination attempt, were jailed; at least twelve people have disappeared and five have been killed, most likely by public security forces; six magazines and two news services were shut down; and soldiers invaded several slum areas of the capital city.

The assassination attempt and the government's subsequent crackdown, have not changed the basic reality of Chile. By repressing legitimate and peaceful dissent, by denying Chileans their right freely to choose their leaders, the dictatorship calls forth the violence that it then uses to justify its continued repression. The cycle of violence will not be broken until democracy is restored to Chile. P.H.

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with four U.S. administrations, and has seen vacillations in U.S. policy. Lest he or his backers assume they are merely facing another passing storm of criticism, it must be made clear this time the U.S. means business, that we will not waiver in our opposition to the Pinochet dictatorship, that we stand, above all else, for democracy in Chile.

The time for flexibility has passed. What is most needed now is resolve and convincing action.

GRACE MOJTABAI ON BOMBS & BIBLES IN AMARILLO

Living with apocalypse

DAVID TOOLAN

"WE URGE individuals involved in the production and stockpiling of nuclear bombs to consider what they are doing, to resign from such activities, and to seek employment in peaceful pursuits." On August 23, 1982, Bishop Leroy Theodore Matthiesen of Amarillo, Texas, addressed that exhortation to workers at the Pantex nuclear assembly plant outside Amarillo. Pantex is *the* final assembly plant of all nuclear weapons manufactured in the United States. Since that time, only one person, Elroy Ramos, father of seven, has responded by resigning from the company. As one ranking federal officer at Pantex put it, the overall reaction to the bishop's letter has been "a great None."

Back in Cambridge, Massachusetts that August, however, Grace Mojtabai clipped and filed a newspaper report of the bishop's statement. The author of four critically acclaimed novels — *Mundome, The 400 Eels of Sigmund Freud, A Stopping Place,* and *Autumn* — she was just starting to write a fifth. But she couldn't put the bishop's call out of her mind. She kept going back to it, increasingly curious to discover how the bishop's summons was being heard — or "how people of conscience, loving parents, thoughtful neighbors, and devoted churchgoers lived calmly with the prospect of nuclear destruction." Her curiosity became insistent. Eventually it led to the making of a remarkable book, *Blessèd Assurance: At Home with the Bomb in Amarillo, Texas* (Houghton Mifflin, $16.95, 255 pp.). The title comes from an old Protestant hymn, "Blessèd Assurance, Jesus Is Mine."

First and foremost, *Blessèd Assurance* addresses a severe communication problem. Amarillo is both host and hostage to Pantex. A 1982 study of local attitudes toward the plant revealed that "*not one* respondent pointed to a moral position as the cause for stress resulting from Pantex." Throughout every year, but particularly on August 6 and during Lent, however, the city is invaded by anti-nuclear activists who climb over Pantex's barbed wire and netted steel fences to protest, pray, and get arrested. Ms. Mojtabai's book is concerned to cross a third fence, "the barrier of incomprehension which continues to separate the demonstrators from the people working inside and from the townspeople of Amarillo."

Who are these townspeople? "AMARILLO, WE LIKE WHO WE ARE," says the Chamber of Commerce sign at the city limit. This is high prairie, windy, big sky country, virtually off the U.S. map in the western Texas Panhandle. It's also Moral Majority, Bible-belt territory, where "God Said It, Jesus Did It, I Believe It, That Ends It." Amarillo has more than two hundred churches — 191 Protestant, 10 Catholic, 1 synagogue. Ms. Mojtabai lets these people speak, lets them have faces beyond stereotypical ones — from corporate-raider Boone Pickens of Mesa Oil to Sunday school teachers and preachers Charles Jones and Royce Elms. The result, which fleshes out the pervasive influence of fundamentalist apocalypticism, is both disturbing and illuminating.

What keeps Amarilloans impervious to the nuclear arms race, Ms. Mojtabai found, is "an ever-deepening despair of human possibilities." That despair is anesthetized by two varieties of American exceptionalism, one the pseudo-religious faith in steady technological progress, the other "the conviction of blessèd assurance, the promise, for true believers, of exemption and safety from the suffering that might befall others."

But the reader, who does not live in Amarillo, is not left off the hook. "Often, these days," writes Ms. Mojtabai, "I find myself staring at the United States *through* Amarillo, indeed, the longer I look at this city, as Flannery O'Connor liked to say about absolutely anything, 'the more of the whole world I see in it.'" In some sense, "every American is host and hostage to Pantex." Amarillo's story is parable.

Two days before the centennial celebration of the Statue of Lady Liberty last July, I conducted the following interview with Grace Mojtabai in New York City. D.T.

TOOLAN: When you say early on in the introduction to *Blessèd Assurance,* "I am a Jew," and "the prospect of a holocaust consuming millions of human beings can never be

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an abstraction to a Jew," I take it that this is one of the keys to the motive behind your book.

MOJTABAI: Well, it's there. I mean I felt that I should say something about my intellectual baggage, or what I came with. I haven't played it up. Some have asked whether there were associations for me between the presence of concentration camps in Europe and the presence of the final assembly plant for nuclear weapons outside Amarillo. People in the book bring it up — they don't want their city to be the Buchenwald of America. But for various reasons, partly because there are other ways of looking at the plant — it's for defensive purposes; we build them so that we don't have to use them, and so on — and partly because I don't want to demonize the people in Amarillo, and don't want to denounce them because I am part of the scene there, habituated to the plant myself, the analogy doesn't really work. I didn't play it up. But it was something that passed through my mind when I became interested in going there and seeing for myself.

TOOLAN: You mention that people in Amarillo claim not to know what the local Pantex plant does. That they feign ignorance that it's the final assembly plant for all nuclear weapons made in this country. Is that still true today?

MOJTABAI: Well, they know. There have been so many people down there questioning them. Mostly they know. They prefer not to dwell on it. I must say that there is a process of habituation to it — and a process of denial. The two are separate. I never have denied Pantex, but I have become habituated to its presence and even the strangeness of it. Not long ago I was taking a reporter out to Pantex. The cows were grazing; they were harvesting wheat right up to the bunkers — and he said, "This is eerie." And I said, "Well, no."

TOOLAN: It had been eerie to you when you first went there.

MOJTABAI: It's eerie now, when I'm in New York thinking about it. It was strange at first sight. And on second sight. But by the tenth or fifteenth or fiftieth time something does happen.

TOOLAN: I thought that one of the most interesting things about *Blessèd Assurance* was the transition that occurred in your own strategy as you sought to understand how Amarilloans could live so peacefully next to the country's sole final assembly plant for nuclear weapons. You came at the project with certain assumptions — that if you understood the geography, the history, and the economics of the place, that would explain why people take Pantex so casually. But at a certain point you seem to have suddenly realized that it was the people's theology, their religious background, that counted more than you imagined. The case in point being the fundamentalist "dispensationalist" vision of history — a tale of repeated human failure to pass God's tests. Time and time again in the past we have failed to escape disaster, and so it will always be. The assumption is that we are powerless to build a just and peaceful future, powerless to avert the nuclear destruction to come. What they rely on, then, what delivers them from despair, is the doctrine of "the Rapture," whereby true believers will be rescued from the coming holocaust.

When you first arrived in Texas, though, you seemed to be the stereotypical New Yorker going down there, thinking, well, as we all know, religion doesn't have much to do with politics. Or religion is a mere mask for other factors. Then you discovered religion was central — and your assumptions had to be radically revised.

MOJTABAI: Well, politics and economics undeniably figure in. But one of the reasons I focused on the religious and gave it, perhaps, disproportionate weight was that it came to me with such a revelation that this was vitally important. And yes, I went down there as the provincial eastern-urban intellectual. You know, on-the-loose, at-large in America, and really puzzled, really uncomprehending. Even though certainly part of my question concerned the response to Bishop Leroy Matthiesen — how do you hear him if you're an Amarilloan? Even with that, however, I discounted the religious dimension.

But I have lived in Iran, and I look at Israel and I have relatives there. And I see the fundamentalist resurgence everywhere in the world. I think one of the reasons I took fundamentalism in Amarillo seriously was that, once I heard its sound often enough there, I was already tuned in, alert to this resurgence. But it took me a long time to believe that it was happening here. Or that people with very moderate religious views — regarded in Amarillo as "sinful" — used religious assumptions to support so many of their other views. Yes, I came from a secular society and stepped off into something very unfamiliar. And that was a real turning point for me.

I don't say the religious factor is the only thing. I focused on it because I wanted to give it weight, maybe disproportionate weight. But somehow I felt it was absolutely necessary for my former self and my friends and associates to take this seriously and give it weight. I felt that Amarillo was important to each and every American — and the book tries to convey some of that conviction.

TOOLAN: What was your background? I take it you've lived in Cambridge (Massachusetts), and in New York.

MOJTABAI: In the sixties I lived in Iran and in Pakistan. I was married then and part of the time my husband was associated with the University of Teheran. Then he became a cultural attaché and we moved to Pakistan. Eventually I came back to this country and took up graduate philosophy at Columbia. For a time, I was teaching philosophy at Hunter College, and later, after going to library school, for six years I was a librarian at the City University of New York.

FATHER DAVID TOOLAN, S.J.*'s book on the consciousness movement,* Facing West from California's Shores, *will be published in the spring by Crossroad.*

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Then I began writing novels. From there I went to the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Studies as a fellow, and that led to a lectureship at Harvard. Then I got a Guggenheim — and at the start of that year off, in the summer, I picked up this newspaper article about Bishop Matthiesen of Amarillo inviting workers to resign from the Pantex plant. I had no notion of why, but filed it away . . . and kept picking it out of my file system and looking at it. The bishop's statement just amazed me. I thought to myself, I'll go to Amarillo and write an article about it to get it out of my system. I went there and stayed a couple of weeks. Of course I had an article and more. I had about two hundred pages of notes. Still puzzled, I came back to New York.

TOOLAN: I'm wondering about the Catholic community in Amarillo. Has there been any sequel to their initial lack of response to Bishop Matthiesen's opposition to the plant's business? Are the Catholics there talking about it? Or has it simply dropped off the face of the map? I understand only one person has resigned from the plant.

MOJTABAI: I started going out after Catholics, but I haven't followed through systematically. The bishop has been heard. And the fact that there was a bishops' pastoral letter on the subject [*The Challenge of Peace*] showed that he was not alone. I thought that would make a big difference. I don't know that it has. Catholics share many of the attitudes of their fellow citizens. They're also a minority and it's painfully visible. There's been a lot of bad blood in the past between Catholics and Protestants there. It's built into some fundamentalist "salvation history" that the Catholic church will form the core of the international order which will help bring the anti-Christ to power. I've heard more anti-Catholic diatribes there than anti-Jewish diatribes.

WHICH MEANS that Catholics are anxious not to offend, not to provoke, not to become too visible. Many of them are Hispanic and Pantex is a good employer. It was, after all, the first affirmative action employer there. I haven't gone after Catholics systematically, but I think many of them feel that Pantex is a good corporate citizen for a variety of reasons. I mean in some sense it *is* a good corporate citizen. It's economically sound, cushioned; people can count on it when other industries fail. And the company does some good things. They contribute to the United Negro College Fund. They do further the higher education of their employees. They car pool, donate blood, have that wonderful Christmas card fund where the money people would spend on cards is given to the needy.

TOOLAN: But you also imply that the company may have had not a little to do with cutting off funding for Catholic Family Services when Bishop Matthiesen established a fund to support workers who wanted to leave Pantex.

MOJTABAI: Yes. On the one hand they are the largest single corporate contributor to United Way. On the other hand, there is a strong possibility that the fact that the manager of Pantex, Charles Poole, was on the board of United Way and demanded "quick action" on the Solidarity Peace Fund [for workers who might heed Bishop Matthiesen's call for resignations] had a lot to do with cutting off funds. I can't document this — it's a hearsay report for which no one will take responsibility — but Poole also stated that there would be a cancellation of the pledges made by Pantex workers to the United Way.

TOOLAN: Is Catholic Family Service still cut off from United Way funding?

MOJTABAI: Well, after reapplying in vain, finally Catholic Family Service decided to break with United Way and go it alone.

Anyway, United Way's suspension of funding really galvanized me. Back in New York, I was on the phone continually with Amarillo, calling United Way, calling Family Service, calling the diocese. I thought it was an extremely vicious move. It was frightening. I have never seen an instance in which a powerful corporation in a town was able to exercise such influence. Incidentally, I think that, quietly, numbers of people canceled their contributions to United Way as a result.

I was very upset about it, and tried to get an Op-Ed in the *New York Times*. The reaction was typical. This is a local story, they said. Finally the *Washington Post* caught it and gave it a full page. Then the *Times* decided to give it a news story. They follow one another. Suddenly it was not a local story. Just as suddenly, the whole country and parts of the world converged on Amarillo. The *Catholic Worker* was finally the only place that would take my editorial.

I finally decided I had to go back to Amarillo. For at that point it became very clear that Pantex was behind the cut-off in funds. One of my responses was, who wants anything to do with this place? But another was, no, no, I have to go back to see this through. So I went back and spent the rest of the year there.

Then I had to go back to Harvard to fulfill a prior teaching commitment. But while I was at Harvard I began taking out maps and drawing circles around Amarillo, trying to figure out how close I could get and have an income. It was the University of Tulsa, 368 miles away, which was as close as I could come. The university fourteen miles away was actively not interested. Tulsa has worked out well.

The unblessed assurance

TOOLAN: In reading your book, I was fascinated with the First United Pentecostal Church and its local pastor, Reverend Royce Elms. Have you had any reaction from him or his congregation to your book?

MOJTABAI: I got a reaction from a cousin of Rev. Elms and it surprised me. She said she read the book at one sitting. She said it very much concerned her and that she was a "thoughtful Christian." Somehow the book disturbed her; she can't quite say how. But she wants to continue the dialogue.

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TOOLAN: Isn't that gratifying?

MOJTABAI: Yes. I've had some very nice letters, but that one touched me most. It's from someone searching, struggling. She's not really sure how, but the book speaks to her in a personal way. It concerns her cousin [Rev. Elms]. . . .

TOOLAN: The Reverend Elms's critique of American society sounded at times very much like Father Daniel Berrigan's.

MOJTABAI: Yes, that's it. . . .

TOOLAN: It would take only a slight shift and Rev. Elms's message would be very political, full of hope for what we might do to dampen the arms race, for instance. Your description of the church service was wonderful. It was so earthy and physical. God, I thought, we could use some of that in Catholic churches! But the other part of Rev. Elms's message, what you call his "final solution," was really almost Gnostic. He advocates abandoning earth, leaving it to its nuclear fate. The juxtaposition of earthiness and other-worldliness was very striking.

MOJTABAI: His diagnosis of some of our ills, I think, is so sympathetic. It's his solutions that worry me. When he starts out with his harangue about our living "deliciously" in a world of want, and our never having experienced the devastation that the nations of Europe have experienced, he is right on target. He's much more astute — at least I find him so — than the Amarillo business people with their bland assurance of upwards and onwards, of steady progress and beneficent technology. When Rev. Elms says that our heads and our hands have outgrown our hearts, I really agree with him. But it's the solution proposed that is devastatingly different. And I find it very dangerous.

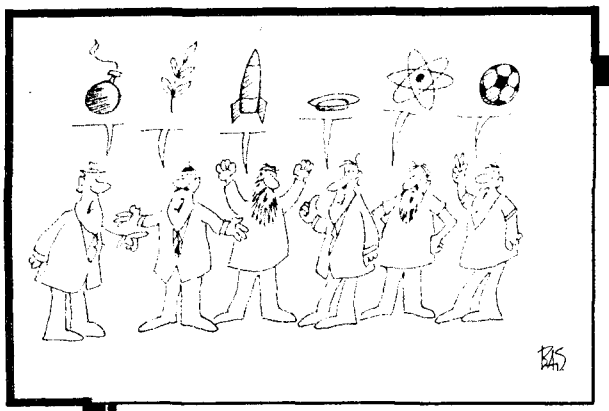
TOOLAN: You mean that the true believers are all going to be magically removed from the holocaust?

MOJTABAI: Yes, instantly.

TOOLAN: I take it you also find danger in the literalistic way they read the Book of Revelations — that it refers to nuclear bombs. And that there's nothing much you can do about stopping them from going off?

MOJTABAI: Exactly.

TOOLAN: Is there a possibility, though, that the people in those Baptist and Pentecostal churches would not recognize at all your emphasis on the "end time" — or the central significance you give it? That they wouldn't see the political implications, for instance, of "the Rapture" — that, as you understand it, it means doing nothing to stop the nuclear arms race? Will they,



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the insiders of this doctrine, recognize themselves in your portrait?

MOJTABAI: It's possible they won't. I mean this "thoughtful Christian" who writes me says, "I don't know what conclusions you've drawn." The fact that I've written the book the way I have makes it possible for her to read it. She's troubled; she senses something, conclusions that are possibly not complimentary. It may be that she's moving from recognition to recognition — as if saying to herself, yes, I know that person, I recognize that teaching.

If I don't impose a quick ideological fix, still I have an agenda. Transparent, not hidden. It's slow and progressively revealing. I've allowed people to speak for themselves wherever possible. In any event, my selection and orchestration is editorial commentary. I'm moving towards a certain realization in the reader, a sense of unease — even though I let it develop more slowly than it developed in myself.

TOOLAN: The question is the weight you give to the end-time thinking. It's very sharp for you — and ominous. Is it equally sharp in these churches? Is it the constant theme of the preaching?

MOJTABAI: It is the constant theme. I don't harp on the dangers but I do come in, do speak of them.

TOOLAN: What I wondered, though, was whether, say for the Rev. Elms's parishioners, apocalypticism actually entails escape from political responsibility or abandoning the earth to inevitable nuclear holocaust.

MOJTABAI: Well, doesn't it go back to Elms's indictment of contemporary American society? As you say, it's close to Daniel Berrigan's. To some extent I follow Elms sympathetically — that I might disarm the reader because I want a certain amount of disarming. But this might also distract from the fact that when I settle on Elms's solution, which I discuss at length and critically, the reader may miss how appalled I am by it.

But I don't think fundamentalist readers fail to recognize themselves in my account, or miss my point. Amazingly, a Sunday school teacher at First Baptist picked up the book and apparently read it. When the book comes out, I thought, that will be the end; we won't talk again. No, his response was extremely thoughtful. He said we all have to read this book and think about it. And this from the man who led me to the book on the fundamentalist doctrine of biblical inerrancy!

TOOLAN: But will the fundamentalist parishioner assent to the logic you see in his extreme end-time thinking: that it means it's futile to do anything to prevent nuclear war, that we'd best drop out of politics altogether? I am still wondering that maybe for one of these parishioners, the logic would not run that way at all.

MOJTABAI: Well, they're not dropping out of salvation history, which is all that matters. They are not dangerously passive. They are working actively in their missionary activities to bring people into this life of salvation. So they do have a sense of social responsibility. So, within their worldview, they're doing all that matters. For our part — and from their viewpoint — we're distracting ourselves from essential business and we're losing our place in salvation history. This earthly history doesn't count.

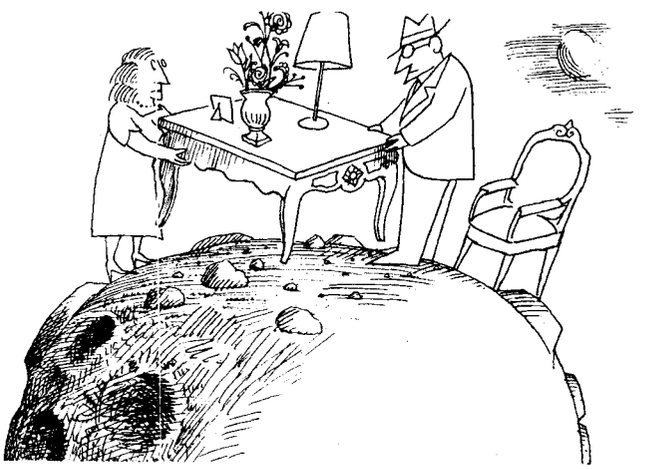
TOOLAN: The neuralgic point is the juncture between salvation history and earthly history, is it not?

MOJTABAI: Our earthly history is doomed. The script is already written [in the Book of Revelation].

TOOLAN: But one of my fellow editors at *Commonweal*, who grew up a Baptist, tells me that her experience of being a Baptist did not entail this narrow focus on saving one's own soul. When she describes all the social activities and works of mercy her church's youth ministry involved her in, it sounds much closer to the Catholic Worker.

MOJTABAI: Okay, they *are* involved in certain charitable activities, always. And there is this complete social life. They have singles ministers, prison ministers, and there is an active social dimension. For the young and the elderly it's wonderful. All of it, however, is aimed at bringing people in. That's the hope if not the expressed intention. Bringing them in, saving them. In fact, they would say they haven't abandoned the world. But the fact is that their intentions are to bring people into ideological conformity, make them like themselves. Even though credal conformity isn't expected. A Southern Baptist feels very little is asked of you: just to be born again, to confess Jesus as your personal savior, and then you're freed.

NONETHELESS, if you're an outsider — a Moslem, Jew, or Hindu — the whole idea is to bring you into the club. The way I am placed, this does not look to me like reaching out to the ends of the earth and welcoming as neighbors all the inhabitants of the earth. Indeed it looks very different to me. Yes, they are socially concerned; they're involved in all sorts



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of charitable work. But the intent I find narrow. Because it isn't simply helping to help, or expressing neighborliness and perhaps giving the Gospel flesh that way — or just living the Gospel that way. They couldn't just live among the Moslems, without proselytizing, as certain Catholic missionaries do. The way I am placed makes it look to me as if their cross is one-sidedly vertical, or at least with a very short horizontal arm directed almost exclusively to the proselytizing mission. Of course if I were a born-again Christian, I wouldn't see the narrowness.

A very large living room

TOOLAN: You make some hard judgments in the book. But your own position is not in the foreground; to a great extent it's recessed. So it seems to me that this allows questions to come out of the reader's own reflection.

MOJTABAI: Yes, that was part of the point. To make it possible for people in Amarillo to see themselves, and to listen to themselves. Without some smart aleck from the east coming in and overvoicing everything — summarizing it all. In fact, one of the original editorial comments from my publisher was, "too much religion" and, well, "summarize it." Say it in your own words. And I did where I felt it was absolutely necessary, but stood back wherever I could, so that it would be possible for Amarilloans to read and listen. Yes, that was very deliberately done.

TOOLAN: What would you like to see happen to Amarilloans, to the readers of your book? Or what has already happened locally that you have seen?

MOJTABAI: I hope that there will be, if not some discussion, at least some soul searching. I want to reach the people in the pews. And the people in Amarillo who aren't in the pews. So they all know what's going on in the churches on the other side of town. Those in the pews of the richer churches, you see, don't know what's going on in the poorer churches on the other side of town. Second Baptist was formed as a mission church from First Baptist. But I'm not sure that at First Baptist they are familiar with what's being taught at Second Baptist. More, I'm not sure that the pastor of First Baptist knows what his 525 Sunday school teachers are saying. These are not credal faiths, so there's a certain freedom within limits.

The people in my book live in the same town, close by each other, but they haven't met, haven't spoken to one another. The book was a chance to bring them into a very large living room — which I don't possess, you know — and to let them listen to one another.

ONE OF THE reactions that I have already heard about was something at a party. I'm told one woman went up to another woman and asked, "Have you read *Blessèd Assurance*?" There was a sudden silence in the room. Everyone was listening. The woman said no. But it's likely that people would read the book and not be willing to say anything about it — in public. But that's all right — if they are thinking about it.

Another reaction occurred at a bookstore. Someone called and asked the bookstore, have you got that book about Amarillo, and the salesperson said "what book?" You know, the caller said, there's a new book about Amarillo — and finally the salesperson said that's not about Amarillo, that's about Pantex. I don't know that that's typical, but it's an interesting precision.

Again, I heard recently that people were standing in line at a bookstore, waiting for something else than my book — but they were talking about Pantex. Well, that's new. Just a short while ago there wasn't much talk of Pantex in town. People would only talk when questioned by reporters, not amongst themselves.

A necessary move

TOOLAN: You spoke before of your "former self." What effect has writing this book had on you?

MOJTABAI: It's completely changed my life.

TOOLAN: For one thing, you've moved to Amarillo.

MOJTABAI: It's completely changed my life. It's too early for me to really assess or understand all that has happened or even all that propelled me to make that move, to decide to go and live there. But I lead a much more distraction-free life there.

Someone from the *Dallas Morning News* wanted to know what difference it's made physically. I live in one small room, and it's all working space — not entertaining space. Not that I ever "entertained" very much, but at least I had the furniture that allowed me to. Now I have a folding bridge table, a bridge chair, and a lamp, which I fold up and take with me to Tulsa, where I now teach half the year. With my pots and pans I look like a peddler. And of course some books. Yet I've had to decide that even books I collected were impediments. So it's been a stripping-down process. I won't say a conversion. I put all the trappings of my trade aside. I keep the essential books, the essential furniture. The bare essentials. (I really did accumulate books.) That's what's different. My worldly possessions are at a minimum.

ANOTHER RESULT of the move is that I take religion much more seriously than I did. I wouldn't say I am closer institutionally, that I am exactly more at home anywhere. But I pay more attention than I did — in my own fashion. I continue going to Masses even though I don't have to. At times I get nothing out of it. You know, sometimes the homily is indifferent. Yet even without the Liturgy of the Word, the symbolism of the Eucharist is very meaningful to me. I even continue to go back to some of the Protestant churches. . . .

TOOLAN: Perhaps because you want to hear better sermons?

MOJTABAI: Yes. And also because I miss keeping up with what people are thinking. This year Doctor Winfred Moore [of First

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Baptist in Amarillo] challenged the right-wing candidate for the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention. He was the more moderate conservative candidate. I went back for his homecoming when he lost. He was very well received by his congregation. They all sang "Sweet, Sweet Spirit." And I joined in this time, holding hands.

TOOLAN: But what brought you to move there? What was that about?

MOJTABAI: Well, first of all I felt I couldn't understand Amarillo unless I were there on a day-to-day basis and saturated, steeped in daily life. For instance, for a long time it was a puzzle to me that the houses were built close together. It seems silly to me now, but I spent more time on this "problem." And then there are those fences, very tight; there are no chinks between the slats. They are privacy fences, I thought. I went all over Amarillo asking people, "Why do you have such fences?" They would give me answers and I wouldn't believe them. I thought there was something deeper at work here, and devious, even demonic. Because here you have all those close-knit houses — as if they wanted to be close to each other — and yet they're divided sharply by those fences. Well, the minute I moved to Amarillo and became a home-renter — not a home-owner — I realized that those fences are necessary just to keep the wind out. There was no other way I could have been convinced. I opened my door a crack and everything blew in. It was that simple.

Certain matters could only be clarified by being there. Living there, I knew what required deep probing and what was simply a fact of life. I didn't have to make up projects for myself. Moreover, wherever I was, I could start talking casually and learn something. It was a necessary move — simply from the standpoint of the book I wanted to write.

BUT THEN, why stay there after the book is written? I wanted to be there when the book came out, and not run away. I felt it was important to say, I'm here. That's why I'm staying on. I do care about the community. I like it. I love the landscape. The place has made it possible for me to live in a certain way which is congenial. I have a lot of friends there. Not the same kind of friends I used to have in New York or Cambridge — occupationally alike or like-minded.

TOOLAN: So concretely, it's more ecumenical or pluralistic for you than New York or Cambridge?

MOJTABAI: Yes, I cross boundaries more easily in Amarillo. I mean here I could theoretically, but I don't. It just doesn't happen. But there, though it's a city, it's a small town. So I know people and they know me. I can be very inward there. But when I don't want to be inward and feel I shouldn't be, I can also be out in the world — with others and for them. Not in a little pocket as one often is in New York or Cambridge. In Amarillo — though you don't have the variety of attitudes, ethnic groups, and religious groups you would have in New York — strangely enough, I mingle and make friends with people whose occupations, religious beliefs, and political beliefs are very different from mine. Somehow that friction and that mingling are very important to me. It's not restful, but I don't want to rest.

Screen

ADAPTATION LOSS

MINOR MIRACLE WORKER

CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD both moves and disappoints. Directed by Randa Haines, whose television experience includes *Hill Street Blues* and the film about incest, *Something About Amelia*, *Children* provides a bare-bones story about an angry young deaf woman (Marlee Martin) and a teacher (William Hurt) determined to get her to speak. Their romance is compelling, especially because of the verve and pain of their "dialogue" through sign language. But Haines makes their love stand too much alone, leaving a thin feel. The movie never delivers what it promises.

Partly this results from changes made in Mark Medoff's play — changes which he presumably approved as co-screenwriter. Of course, what works as a play doesn't always work as film. A play has to be opened up, dialogue simplified, scenes added, etc. Nevertheless, both stage play and screenplay require a strong, rich story, and it is unfortunate that Medoff succumbed to pressures to simplify his, which has been adapted, not into a film, but into *television* film, with a lowest-common-denominator plot, reduced list of characters, and pro forma happy end. As a result, it lacks the ambition, rawness, and hard-earned optimism not just of its source, but its prototype, *The Miracle Worker*.

Hurt and Martin make the film worth seeing. As with his Oscar-winning role in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, Hurt took a pay cut to make this film. He is at his best in classroom scenes with deaf students, when he tries to coax them from negativism via an idealism that Hurt, both by age and look, seems to have memorized from the 1960s. He also has a hard task to master: since Marlee Martin won't speak, he has to interpret her rapid (often tempestuous) sign language in a deadpan fashion to avoid stealing any of her thunder. Martin has remarkably severe black and white coloring, and taut, expressive cheekbones. She also uses her thick black boots for punctuation and to embody frustration. Between her and Hurt some real heat gets generated, especially in one scene of angry lovemaking where she vehemently overwhelms him.

But they are limited by the thinness of the plot. Hurt's egoism is introduced, but never explored, so that he comes across as too pure a hero. Martin can rely on no more than petulant perfectionism (or as she explains in sign language, "I won't do anything I don't do well") to explain her refusal to

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vocalize. Some strong minor characters, like the school principal (Phillip Bosco) and Martin's mother (Piper Laurie), are also left undeveloped, as though Haines had to hold the story to a strict diet of characterization.

Moreover, Haines uses landscape symbolism unevenly. At first her touch is light, with mood scenes showing Hurt's trip by ferry to the peninsula where the school is located. The water imagery is deepened, poetically, with some beautiful scenes of Martin's nude swimming; the suggestion is even made that she has developed other, extraordinarily sensuous capacities as compensation for deafness. But the water imagery is overdone, especially in a stupid scene where Hurt "descends" into her pool. Save us.

Also uneven is Haines's use of music. Hurt's love of Bach and his attempt to teach some of his students rock music through rhythmic vibrations are deftly exploited. But the script is over-heavy with rock songs and teenage behavior. There is a line between appealing to adolescents and pandering to them. There is also a line between adaptation and dilution. Unfortunately, *Children of a Lesser God* often crosses both lines.

TOM O'BRIEN

Stage

ME & MY REVIVAL

ROASTING OLD CHESTNUTS

AT THE END of the first act of *Me and My Girl*, Bill Snibson, the newly discovered Earl of Hareford, declares his allegiance to his Cockney upbringing by demonstrating "The Lambeth Walk." He does so with such enthusiasm that everyone on stage, Cockney and aristocrat alike, is drawn in by the infectious song and the strut-dance that goes with it. Anyone coming fresh to the show from the current musical theater might see the number as a borrowing from "The Best of Times" scene in *La Cage aux Folles*. After all, there are direct references to works that came long after 1937, when *Me and My Girl* was first produced in London — particularly to *My Fair Lady* — and Robert Lindsay sings "Leaning on a Lamppost" as though he had just taken a crash course in Fred Astaire's sentimental wryness. Yet, "The Lambeth Walk" was already crossing cultural lines in its heyday. It was one of the few songs by Noel Gay to become popular in the United States. Duke Ellington recorded it in 1938, one of a rather odd collection of popular songs he did on the Brunswick label, and — in an even greater cultural leap — I learned to do the Lambeth Walk so that I could be up-to-date with the dancing crowd at Connersville (Indiana) Junior High.

Never one of the Noel Coward-Bea Lillie-Gertrude Lawrence transatlanticians, Noel Gay wrote English musicals for English audiences, and they were performed by stars like Jessie Matthews, Jack Hulbert, and Cicely Courtneidge, who seldom appeared on the Broadway stage and with minimal success when they did. *Me and My Girl* was produced by and starred Lupino Lane, a fixture of English musicals long after his career as a silent-film comedian had been almost forgotten. It is a standard tale of cultural dislocation (cf., *Ruggles of Red Gap*) in which the joke lies in the juxtaposition of two standards of behavior. The ugly ducklings, who are not remotely ugly to begin with, turn into swans by the end of the show, and the resident swans pick up a number of duckling virtues on the way. The happy ending is *de rigueur*, but the journey to the final curtain is not sustained by complexities of plot and character (there are none), but by amiable tunes, likable dancing, and an abundance of occasions for physical comedy. So it was in 1937. So it is in revival.

Richard Armitage, Noel Gay's son, decided that the 1980s was the proper decade for a return of his father's most successful musical. A number of newspapers have carried accounts of how the show was re-created, stories of determined research and chance discoveries complicated enough to suggest that Armitage and his associates are candidates for a new edition of *The Scholar Adventurers,* should Richard D. Altick have one in mind. Of course, the result is not really a re-creation since the book, as I indicated above, has post-1930s allusions, and a number of Gay songs from other shows have been added to *Me and My Girl*. The revival was an immediate success in London, where it is still playing, presumably because it tapped the nostalgia market, but how can American audiences be nostalgic for a kind of show that never played here? Still, it looks a likely candidate for Broadway success for two reasons. For one thing, it is handsomely done — amusing sets that win applause every time they change shape or direction, colorful period constumes, a good American company to back up the talented English star. Lindsay, whose credits are more classical than acrobatic, is rubber-jointed in the Lupino Lane tradition, a nice combinationof boyish charm and knockabout comedy. A second thing in the show's favor is that it is not at all serious. Unlike *Pygmalion* or even *My Fair Lady,* it has nothing to say about class distinctions and social pretensions. These days, when seriousness is hardly a requisite on Broadway, a show like *Me and My Girl,* which is amusing, spirited, and undemanding, is sure to find its audience. Since I am as susceptible to stylish triviality as the next high-minded critic, I can only wish it well.

IF *Me and My Girl* set my junior-high dancing feet atingle, the other current Broadway revival, *Arsenic and Old Lace* — a bonafide American artifact — awakened memories of my early experiences as a playgoer. I find that I can still name most of the cast of the road company I saw in Indianapolis, in which Erich von Stroheim played the wicked Jonathan Brewster and the Boris Karloff lines were rewritten to refer to the new star. Joseph Kesselring's play opened early in 1941, but, despite a few references to Hitler and the war in Europe, in has no more to do with that year than *Me and My Girl* does with 1937. It is a murder farce, a mixture of mayhem, slapstick, and gentility, a genre more popular forty years ago than it is now. The only

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play of Kesselring's that was ever popular, it is set in a Victorian house in Brooklyn which means that it takes place in a Broadway theater, populated by comic types and a great many jokes about theater critics. It is an old-fashioned play in that it has three acts, in addition to flashy curtain lines, and a somewhat laborious way of building its comic effects and creating suspense. An efficient play of its type, it can only come alive in revival if its limitations are accepted and used by a director and a cast who have a firm sense of the play's shape and rhythm and who ignore the specialty aspects of the characters and work as an ensemble. Brian Murray, who did somewhat better with *Hay Fever* last year, and his all-star cast never get Kesselring's chestnut properly roasted.

All-star these days means movie and television personalities, and the audience greeted Jean Stapleton (*All in the Family*), Polly Holliday (*Alice*), William Hickey (*Prizzi's Honor*), and Abe Vigoda (*Barney Miller*) as old friends. Only Tony Roberts was somewhat stinted in applause the night I was there; is that a comment on his association with Woody Allen? Although all these performers have had solid stage careers, they played like refugees from other media, each in business for him/herself. The result was an occasional funny line and, in Holliday's case, the real suggestion of a character, but no finished show. Now let me tell you about that production in Indianapolis. . . .

GERALD WEALES

POMPEI, JERUSALEM, & NEW YORK

Improvisational notes

MIMI D'APONTE

IMPROVISATION. In an era when actors become mayors and even grander politicians, such a theatrical concept invites not only discussion but perhaps redefinition. Traditionally speaking, "to improvise" on the stage connotes creating something new and unrehearsed on the spot before an audience. Yet dramatic improvisation may also imply a preexisting text to which any given performance's actors must refer, not only as touchstone, but as ballast. In using improvisation to recreate ancient and classic plays for contemporary audiences, as I have seen done increasingly in recent years, a new question arises as well: When does a classical play in the hands of a new generation of theater artists yield genuine improvisational theater? I have asked the question on both sides of the Atlantic.

Each summer for the past thirty-five years, Pompei's brilliantly renovated Teatro Grande, designed originally by the Romans c. 150 A.D., rocks with laughter and applause. The ancient theater, a semi-circle of high granite steps whose seats are softened somewhat by twentieth-century seating pads, is located fourteen miles south of Naples. It employs modern lighting techniques for its performances under the stars, but, as its modern performers will explain animatedly, it offers that rarest of modern dramatic phenomena: the human voice amplified entirely by architectural rather than electronic means. Says Giacomo Rizzo, one of last summer's stars, "Acting here is the best experience possible because the actor must usually dominate the audience. But in this location, the audience comes to the actor, surrounds the actor, making his work play."

Since 1951, Franco Natalino, director of Pompei's tourist board, has been producing classics in these revitalized ruins. He relies heavily on the comedies of Titus Maccius Plautus (c. 254-184 B.C.), the Roman dramatist, as the staple of his five-play season. Last year I saw his production of Plautus's *The Pot of Gold*, forerunner of Molière's *The Miser*. In this production, directed by Guglielmo Guidi, parsimonious old Euclio's pronouncements were delivered in formal Italian, whereas the rehearsed asides and improvised remarks of the comic slaves and servants were often spoken in the modern Neapolitan dialect. According to Guidi, who also directs an acting school in Naples, such interruptions are also common in early twentieth-century Neapolitan comedy, productions of which are also part of the Teatro Grande's repertoire. "There is an assonance between classical and Neapolitan comedy which exists with the works of Aristophanes and Plautus, but not with Terence," says Guidi. "While Terence is always strictly tied to the text, Aristophanes, Plautus, and Neapolitan playwrights are generally dedicated to performance, production, and spectacle. The result of such assonance is that one can create a deep communication with the audience."

Drama historians point out that there are three distinct characteristics of Roman comedy, all of which relate to improvisation: Spontaneous dialogue, in the form of frequent asides; direct rapport with the audience, evidenced by numerous interruptions of the performance with bursts of applause and shouts of "Bravo!"; and extended physicalization of the acting style, a necessary device in classical comedy because of the theater's colossal size, but also a means of evoking heightened and cumulative laughter. As I can attest, all three are erupting lavishly in modern-day Pompei.

On another side of the Mediterranean, improvisation of a different sort makes its home at Jerusalem's Khan Theater. The Khan was established in 1968. By 1972 it began to limit its productions to those of Jewish or Israeli writers. And since 1984, all works are performed in Hebrew. Its ten-member repertory company plays for about ten months a year at

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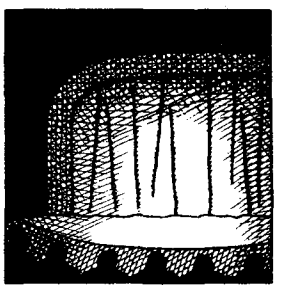
its Jerusalem home, with three- or four-day runs in other Israeli cities. On the two occasions I attended the Khan last summer, its 300 seats were filled with young people. The attentive audience brought to mind a recent Israeli statistic: about 25 percent of the population attends at least one live performance weekly. Artistic Director Yossi Ysraely prepares two of the Khan's annual productions.

I was fortunate to attend both his *The Dybbuk*—Shloime Ansky's Russian classic, originally written in Yiddish and first produced by the Habimah Theater in Moscow in 1922 — and his *Tehilah*—a dramatic adaptation of a famous S.Y. Agnon short story. Both plots unfold as stories within stories. Classic dramatic elements — childhood promises, broken marriage contracts, father-daughter conflicts, ultimate peace and absolution through exceptional deaths — are inexorably intertwined with the intracacies of Hasidic law and communion with the dead. Each story is unraveled before the eyes of involved but powerless participants whose inability to effect the outcome makes them appear as nearly detached from the action itself.

Ysraely's style is surrealistic. He creates numerous dreamlike sequences which incorporate ballet-derived pantomime to illustrate the narrative, often punctuating the proceedings with the sounds of voices and instruments oscillating between brusque staccato and eerie laments. By using techniques improvised from ballet, music, and pantomime, Ysraely has removed *The Dybbuk* light years from its traditional performance by the Habimah Theater, which I had seen in New York twenty years ago. Similarly, he has transposed *Tehilah* from short story to a true theatrical piece.

For the Khan Theater, however, improvisation takes place entirely in rehearsal, never, as in Pompei, before the eyes of its audience. These Israeli plays have evolved into highly choreographed, often dissonantly chanted works, heavily dependent upon once-improvised elements which have since been fixed into precise performance patterns.

In New York, the current quality of improvisation improves in direct proportion to its distance from Broadway. Although promising the real thing, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* 1986 Tony Award winner for best musical, offers little room for genuine improvisation. The barometer of audience applause used to determine Drood's "mysterious" murderer tends to go in one of two ways given the characterizations presented, with all "suspects" fully rehearsed to step into the murderer's role. The audience's choice of "lovers," however, seems to be more varied and spontaneous, offering a genuine sense of improvisation.



In an Off-Broadway production of *Sills and Company* at the Lamb's Club Little Theater, on the other hand, the audience receives more than two hours' worth of theatrical improvisation. Paul Sills and his company of three women and five men base their technique on materials from Viola Spolin, the director's mother and author of that contemporary bible for actors, *Improvisation for the Theater*. The cast works in intimate ensemble fashion, closely attuned to the wishes of the audience, always utilizing the special talents of each of its gifted members. Centerpieces of their routine include scenes in which a variety of gibberish is employed, scenes in which the audience assigns each player specific animal designations, and scenes of spontaneous poetry, short story, and operatic creation, all chosen by the audience. Brilliant as the work is, however, by the beginning of Act II one longs for the voice of a playwright to direct this wealth of improvisation.

The work of Dario Fo, the Italian theater artist who was denied a visa to the United States in 1980 because it was deemed "inappropriate" by the State Department, finally came before Off-Broadway audiences in New York at the Joyce Theater for a week in late May. *Mistero Buffo (Comic Mystery)* offered both the vision of the playwright and improvisational techniques which are perhaps without equal in contemporary Western theater.

The presentation at the Joyce was as effective for English-speaking audience members as for those who were bilingual, thanks to the brilliant teamwork of Fo and his impressive young American translator, Ron Jenkins. Mr. Jenkins is also an actor in his own right, and the spontaneous translations which he offered, coupled with the comradely master/apprentice relationship rendered by the Fo/Jenkins pair, provided a study of theatrical improvisation at its best.

The evening's entertainment took a good deal of its style from those medieval itinerant jugglers or *giullari* from whom the play's own subtitle is borrowed. Fo relates superbly with his audience, as if, in fact, he were speaking to a group of people whom he has met before in some oft-frequented piazza. He is at once confiding, entertaining, gossiping, describing at random, it would appear, thoughts, emotions, impressions, and all the while using his large body with incredible dexterity as a living, ever-changing illustration of what he is saying.

For several of the scenes, Fo employs "grammelot" — a nonsense language he invents phonetically as if it were Northern Italian dialect, English, French, Italian. He becomes transformed, before our eyes and without costume or prop, from a chatty fellow letting us in on historical gossip, into an Italian peasant, a French advisor to the king, an English lawyer of high place, a pope. Each sketch is politically biting, physically hilarious, and theatrically successful in its maintenance of character. And along each step of the way, the accurate and graceful work of the American actor/translator proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that during each performance Fo weaves a new variation of his basic script — which, despite diversions and meanderings, remains true to his constant theme of cutting the politically powerful down to size.

It appears that the art of improvisation, in all its variety and variation, remains stubbornly alive and even well on both sides of the Atlantic.

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Books: A NOVEL OF THE AFGHAN WAR

KARA KUSH
Idries Shah
Stein & Day, $17.95, 575 pp.

Robert Ochs

IT is not surprising that people have a blurry impression of the Afghan war. There has been a dull sameness about the reports in the media, repeated periodically since the day President Carter announced our boycott of the Moscow Olympics to protest the Russian invasion. We are told of primitive tribesmen wearing turbans and baggy trousers, unable to unite in a single command, engaged in a futile attempt to stop the Russian juggernaut with outmoded weapons. Yet this onesided struggle has lasted longer than World War II, with the Russians still unable to hold sway beyond the confines of their own bases and patrolled stretches of main highway, and unable to count more than three hundred Afghan Communist allies.

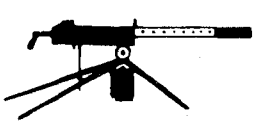
This hitherto featureless picture has been filled in, and significantly corrected, with abundant, fresh, informed detail in Idries Shah's novelized account, *Kara Kush*. Himself an influential Afghan with remarkable access to reports from all parts of the country, even from inside the Soviet Union, Shah has told the story of the epic resistance with all the excitement of a best-selling adventure thriller.

"Kara Kush," the title, comes from the pet name once given by his nurse to the central character, Adam Durany, an American-educated Afghan engineer. She called him her little eagle, "Kara Kush" in their Turki dialect, and he came close to being bullied for it on the playground until it inspired him to resist the bully and rally his comrades. A later inspiration prompts him to take the name of The Eagle publicly, as an emblem symbolizing all Afghans, this time "to beat the Red bully."

Starting with a handful of men, The Eagle aims to provide exploits, to show the Afghans that "everyone can do something," that even a small force can hurt the Russians, who are not invincible if the Afghans fight in the historical Afghan way, dispersed, in small bands, using the terrain. His overriding goal is to establish a basis for cooperation, a centralized information network, not a centralized command.

Small victories engender larger ones, and soon a whole nation is galvanized, awakened to its history of never submitting to foreign occupation. The information net providing links to The Eagle and his nest in the mountains spreads so widely that anyone stirred to "join the resistance" quickly finds the way. Since ancient ethnic and tribal bonds remain unbroken, there is little atmosphere of suspicion of old neighbors; infiltrators would stand out. Occupied Afghanistan is not a nation divided, wavering between collaboration and resistance, or fighting a civil war.

The book exerts an effect on the reader quite beyond a *Shogun*, or a Ken Follett novel (the latest itself about Afghanistan), not to mention a Robert Ludlum. One finishes it without the usual aftertaste of having consumed packaged heroics, with incidents conjured up cynically and/or sentimentally, to provide fantasy victories over imaginary enemies. Yet the familiar elements are all here: behind-the-line commando raids in enemy uniform, KGB spies and torture chambers, assaults by small bands on massively armed opponents, the detailed attention to military hardware. But never before in a war novel have I had such a sense of following *fateful* events in the lives of other people, i.e., of fellow human beings who "have fates," destinies. One feels this of the Russians as well as the Afghans. This is a cold-war thriller assuming a long human perspective that one might almost call a sophisticated variant of *sub specie aeternitatis*.



A particular glory of *Kara Kush* is its host of real-life "minor" characters, such as Karima, the Soviet general's cook; Mirzai, the proper civil servant who must execute his kinsman's KGB murderer; the old Russian general arrested for blurting that the ragged Afghan fighters remind him of World War II Ukrainian peasants resisting the Nazis; Azambai, the Soviet army captain (who cannot defect without endangering his family back home, so must contrive to be "killed in action"); Nampaz, the baker supplying the Russian fort.

These numerous "other" figures are not so much minor characters or supporting actors in the background, as part of a panoramic foreground *alongside* The Eagle who links them together. Though The Eagle is a national hero (he deliberately cultivates the role in order to catalyze the resistance) he is not the hero of the novel, at least in the usual sense. The attention usually given to a central character's psychological processes or love life, or even his narrow escape from death, is here dispensed with.

One brims with admiration for the Afghans, and with a new pride in what people are capable of, especially when equipped with a functioning tradition of magnanimity and loyalty. One envies the Afghans their truly usable past, and its ready availability. Time and again in the book, proverbs, folk tales, phrases from the Koran and "the classics" occur to ordinary people in moments requiring resourcefulness, or calm, or the generosity that makes light of death.

Any reader aware of Shah's principal reputation, as the leading exponent of contemporary Sufism and author of some thirty books on the subject, will find additional curiosities to wonder about in this "first novel." Especially, perhaps, the crucial presence in the story of the largest hoard of gold the world has ever seen, worth over $200 billion! For Shah has woven the legend of this buried treasure (which once existed, only to disap-

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pear around 1750) into the whole length of his very realistic narrative.

This time Shah is writing as an Afghan, though one who has lived most of his life abroad, in England since the fifties. His gesture follows the deceptively simple maxim guiding so many characters in the book, that each one does what he can, according to his situation. Rather than put his vast collection of firsthand reports and testimonials into a scholarly or journalistic account, Shah apparently expects to have a wider influence through a *narrative* which, as he told a BBC interviewer, "a person would read who was not particularly interested in the Afghan war, who wanted a good read. And perhaps information."

By the story's end, the reader has effortlessly absorbed an abundance of this information, about Afghanistan's mountains, valleys, and deserts; its ethnic variety (including the Pashtuns, who take seriously their putative descent from the Israelites!); its long history as frustrator of empires; its religious and moral heritage animated by a non-fanatical spirituality. And there is the lingering memory of that fabulous treasure, buried in this "land where legends live," reminding its people that extraordinary outcomes are possible.

A succinct & careful interpreter

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD
OPPOSITION, TENSION, OR TRANSFORMATION

Robert E. Webber
Zondervan, $11.95 paper, 333 pp.

Jeffrey Gros

IN RECENT years, largely because of the media focus on the religious right, the conservative evangelicals have been receiving more attention, even in Catholic circles. However, the vast majority of Protestants in this sector of American Christianity — Pentecostals, Holiness, and other evangelicals — while being strong on the authority of the Bible, do not consider themselves fundamentalist. Furthermore, many of these churches exist because of class prejudice in the more historic Protestant churches, as a result of their stand against slavery in the nineteenth century or, coming out of an Anabaptist tradition, because of their peace position. Recently, because of their evangelistic commitments, their numbers have increased and their scholars have also grown in number and sophistication. Pluralism on public policy questions has also grown apace.

Not all the evangelicals are comfortable with the Moral Majority, nor is the *Sojourners* community representative of their diversity. Among the more important developments in this community is the clarification of points of view on the relation of the church to the world.

This volume, by Wheaton professor Robert Webber, gives a history of the relationship of the church to the world, concluding with evaluations of Roman Catholic, World Council of Churches, and World Evangelical Fellowship perspectives, and critical comments about some other points of view on the subject. While the book is accessible to mature adult and student audiences as well as to experts in social ethics, the interpretive principles are so fresh, and the material juxtaposed and evaluated so different, that it can serve as a ground-breaking effort leading to more critical studies. The author concludes that the World Council, the teachings of the Catholic church and decrees of the Second Vatican Council, the World Evangelical Fellowship, and the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelism give a common witness to certain key points of biblical social ethics. These points of remarkable convergence are: the centrality of Christ's victory over the world; the reality of structural as well as personal evil in the world, and the inseparability of evangelism from social action. Webber also assesses such figures as J. Richard Neuhaus, Jerry Falwell, and the tenets of civil religion. He finds all of them wanting in the christocentric and evangelical integrity of the former three communities.

The book is clearly written for an evangelical audience, who may well have formed a social ethics in the past without a great deal of attention to tradition. The book begins with a firm biblical basis, and includes exegetical appendices on *kosmos, ekklesia, stoicheia* (principalities), and *dunamis* or *exousia* (powers). Compared to the usual evangelical approach, the emphasis on the biblical doctrine of the church and its implications for social ethics comes as a welcome surprise. For in the past, much of evangelical ethics has been overshadowed by a personalized and even individualistic ethic growing out of a conservative Enlightenment pietism — where ecclesiology is almost reduced to an optional substudy under pastoral practice. In contrast, Webber strongly affirms the sacramental reality of the church as the basis for action in the world. This is articulated in evangelical terms, honoring the high doctrine of Scripture, evangelism, and conversion so central to an evangelical identity.

Catholic and mainline Protestant readers may be puzzled by the amount of time and energy devoted to Satan and eschatological themes. However, if one understands the centrality of the Evil One and of the end time, in that half of the Protestant world in the U.S. which speaks of itself as "evangelical," it will be apparent how significant these insights are in determining Christian engagement in the political and economic order.

Another element of the book which will be of interest to readers from whatever tradition, is the treatment of history. Historically, evangelicals have not weighed the data of Christian history as heavily as particular interpretations (usually nineteenth-century) of the Scripture in dealing with social ethics. Webber offers a brief and clear recounting of the church's relationship to the world, highlighting the subapostolic and patristic periods with particular emphasis on Augustine. While his treatmeant of the Middle Ages could hardly be characterized as the "Thirteenth, the Greatest of Centuries," there is a much more evenhanded and balanced treatment of Innocent III and the Catholic contribu-

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tion in the pre-Reformation era than is usual in Protestant works on social ethics. The segment on the Reformation is helpful, because of its treatment of Anabaptism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism, not only in their original time and place, but also in their contemporary interpretations, particularly where they converge or contrast with the thesis of the book. While a brief book of this sort, surveying such widely divergent present communities and time periods is necessarily quite sketchy, it is remarkable how one can be introduced to such wide variety so clearly and concisely.

Certainly Protestant re-evaluation of the pre-Reformation period will have to continue on deeper levels. Post-Reformation Catholicism, with the exception of Vatican II and beyond, is yet to be assimilated. However, this sort of synthetic study can advance ecumenical mutual understanding, as well as point new directions of convergence in social ethics. Webber's last section on "Contemporary Models of Church and World" will be of most interest, since it lays out in some detail the contemporary challenges and the Catholic, World Council, Evangelical, and New Right responses.

While Catholics and mainline Protestants will differ with particular evaluations of their traditions, Webber's demonstration of the convergences is masterful. I suspect Karl Barth, Leslie Newbigin, and other theological voices shaping the early years of the World Council would find it strange to discover an interpreter seeing a strong christological focus emerging at Uppsala (1968) and deepening at Nairobi (1975) as a result of the influence of liberation theology! The careful treatment of the discussions in the World Evangelical Fellowship through the 1970s and 1980s will be a revelation to many evangelicals as well as to those outside the evangelical orbit. Like the Roman Catholic bishops' teaching on economics and peace, the best biblical reflection of evangelical scholars and leaders has yet to be received by the grassroots of that community. However, the fact that there is so much common Christian ground should alert all of these sectors to the potential for common witness and action in the world — together. Of course Catholic scholars favorable to liberation theology will find Webber's evaluation somewhat prejudicial, but to the evangelical world, which has not produced this school of thought, one must expect it to sound alien and sometimes extreme.

Webber identifies secularism, scientism, nationalism, political ideology, and economic utopianism as the new demons facing the churches in the latter half of the twentieth century. His succinct but careful treatment of these categories of social evil invite not only the evangelical reader, but any serious Christian to evaluate the present situation in the light of the Gospel. Indeed, it is the lack of even-handed christocentrism and not the specific political positions of the religious right which qualify it as non-evangelical, over against Catholic and conciliar voices. It is my hope that this study will not only provide useful text and adult discussion material, but will also engender further theological and historical research in the line of the methodology it uses.

Wracking more than the imagination

THE BODY IN PAIN
THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF THE WORLD
Elaine Scarry
Oxford, $24.95, 385 pp.

Edith Wyschogrod

THIS book has a single subject, pain. Because pain is itself the most private of experiences it is largely inexpressible. For what language could correspond to its felt quality other than cries and groans? When pain is expressed in communicable form, when it acquires conceptual structure, this transformation, contends Ms. Scarry, can become the foundation not only for human creation or "making" but also for an alienated language of pain which is brought out in destroying or "deconstructing" both the bodies of human beings and the artifacts of civilization. Pain is the basis for both making and unmaking the world.

While the book is phenomenological in method, descriptive rather than prescriptive, there is no mistaking its moral message: it is imperative for human beings to find non-destructive expressions for pain. This may account for the urgency of tone that characterizes Ms. Scarry's style. The book is extraordinary and original, brilliant but wild, and sometimes perverse in some of its more extreme assertions. The implicit moral agenda may also explain the variety of materials included in developing its thesis: Amnesty International documents on torture, transcripts of personal injury trials, the works of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Defoe, Sartre, and Mann, Kissinger on foreign policy, Clausewitz on military strategy, medical literature on pain, not to speak of the Bible and Marx. The Bible and Marx receive extended separate treatment.

I warn the reader to keep the book's central thesis about the nature of pain in constant view not only because of the eclectic character of the evidence adduced to support it, but also because of the dizzying number of subtheses that Ms. Scarry develops. The book's difficulties do not reflect quirks on the part of the author, a professor of literature at the University of Pennsylvania, but result from the necessity of breaching the disparate themes she is compelled to treat.

The Body in Pain is divided into two parts: the first considers the structure of unmaking exemplified in torture and war; the second takes up making or creation by analyzing, first, the relation of pain to imagining, second, the relation of the body's sentience to voice as that relation is understood in Jewish and Christian Scripture and in the writings of Karl Marx. The study then concludes by examining the structure of artifacts — or the potentially nondestructive expressions of pain.

Underlying the sections on war and

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Dave Leedy

Four-Day Storm

Every morning we thought the storm was over.
Families came walking out to inspect all the new
improbabilities: power lines at their leisure
on the ground, safely turned off; roads green with trees.

At night we set two lanterns on the low table before us
and foolishly, several candles in the window behind,
for a long read, first stories and fairy tales,
then even the Bible or *The Odyssey*.
The children fell, listening, asleep. There would be no school
or work next day. We could move them by flashlight later
to their own rooms. If we wanted we could read all night
with no sense of being guided by the words,
two heads in laps, two above their book
while a gate would begin to slam
and fircones flew at the windows like birds.

Real birds may have been blown sideways out of their trees
but next day they were calling in about the right numbers.
We'd go down on the beach road early before the cars came,
to see the haul of smooth sticks and pieces of shore life,
a crab going the wrong way, sand dollars, never whole,
arranged by a light random touch across the road,
even in gardens and over lawns.

At home after breakfast there'd be a branch nearly a tree
to haul down; every night one fell on our roof and stayed,
a great blow, then a quiet friend,
by noon a trim stack and some pieces
the children could throw into the blackberry patch.

On the fifth night driving home
we saw the lights on the other side of Murden Cove blink on.
In one instant, ordinary life. Before we could get back
it might come on for us
and be burning in all the odd and usual places.

Le Roy Smith, Jr.

Utopia Perceived

I cannot see the grandeur of the scheme,
only the steel-cold day that sets and dawns,
only the Serpent leering from the Tree
and Cain, the honoured, with his hero's brand.

Barbara M.R. Van Dyken

Mortuary as Setting for Verismo Opera

Front Right stage:
Heroine sits,
Poised in her black disguise,
Flowered bier a backdrop.

Her dead is the whole scenario.

With notes focused still,
Her aria rises,
Phrases her offering
Quietly.
Her voice evokes the gauze of dreams
Now become her keepsake weeds,
Expression, gift of age.

Front left stage:
Supporting chorus of kin,
On entrance,
Sound their close-knit harmony
Around her air.
Moving downstage, beyond her range,
In counterpoint
They rehearse their private tunes.

The truth of death
Holds the old
To true pitch.
The rest
Miss the theme
In mixed voices.

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torture is the contention that the difficulty in expressing physical pain leads to serious perceptual and political complications — and distortions. Because the attributes of pain are hard to objectify or, once objectified, easy to misappropriate, pain and its language are often usurped by or conflated with debased forms of power. The successful articulation of pain, which for Scarry refers objectified attributes to their appropriate body zones, will, to the contrary, render such misuse impossible. Torture, she argues, produces pain in the body of the victim and in doing so renders pain visible. How? Not by giving voice to the *experienced* pain of the tortured but by consigning the pain to itself in the sense that the torturer forces the victim to speak the language of the regime. Interrogation and confession provide the structure for this reallocation of pain. What motivates torture is the power that physical pain possesses to confer its own "incontestable reality" on the very forces that have inflicted pain. Torture "[falsifies] the reality of the very thing it has itself objectified by a perceptual shift which converts the vision of suffering into the wholly illusory but, to the torturers . . ., wholly convincing spectacle of power."

Like Nietzsche, Scarry interprets torture as an expression of power that, in Nietzsche's words, "is soaked in blood thoroughly and for a long time." But torture is not, as for Nietzsche, an affirmation of strength. Rather it is because the regime's power is so contestable to begin with that torture is used. Scarry's thesis is compelling. To the counterargument that stable as well as unstable regimes have resorted to torture, Scarry would reply that *perceived* rather than actual instability is often the issue. Example: Stalin's perception of potential treachery.

In the case of war, Scarry argues, each side attempts to out-injure the other. But from this it does not follow, as conventional wisdom holds, that the winner is in a position to decide whatever issues were alleged to spark the conflict. Why? Because the loser lacks the power to contest the war's outcome. Citing Clausewitz, she contends that even at war's end "many treaties have been concluded before . . . the balance of power had been seriously altered." But if this is the case it is difficult to justify war since its alleged singular attribute, the power of its own enforcement and therefore the capacity to resolve disputes, does not exist. It is the widespread *perception* that war has this outcome that often enables the victor to settle controversial issues.

Scarry maintains further that war, like torture, opens the possibility for translating attributes of the body into another language. The hurt of millions of damaged bodies is made invisible and is "relocated," transferred to conceptual issues, freedom, justice, and the like. This does not mean that Scarry misses the point that some wars are fought for justifiable reasons while others are not. It does mean that if the outcome of war were perceived correctly as not insuring the victor's power of enforcement then the one factor differentiating war from other contests is missing. Might it then be possible (as William James had hoped) to find a moral equivalent for war, some context in which bodies would remain intact?

From the deconstruction of the world Scarry turns to its mirror image, creation. Pain, she argues, is an objectless state: it simply is. It is also the least liked of all states, "the most aversive." When pain is felt, the desire to move "out and away from the body" is pressing. The state most unlike pain, then, is imagining — which is nothing but its objects. Pain, like seeing or feeling, is a kind of sentience but without objects; imagination is object-laden but without sentience. Pain can only become an intentional state, one that has objects, by hitching itself to the imagination. The two form an inner psychological "loop" which is given exterior expression in work, a word that, for Scarry, is a near equivalent for both "pain" and "created object." Through its expression as work, the sheer empty sentience that is pain finds social embodiment.

Scarry's account is a materialist one. The embodiment of the imagination's content is preferable to its remaining merely subjective. In Western culture, she argues, creation has been given its major subjective expression in the Judeo-Christian structure of belief. Material self-expression, on the other hand, has been best understood by Karl Marx. Marx is, she remarks in passing, our major philosopher of material objects. This judgment is not likely to secure consensus but should not blind one to the originality of her interpretation of Marx.

Treating Marx not as the critic of Western economic systems but as the premier philosopher of the problem of material creation, Scarry suggests that, for Marx, the made world is the projected body of human beings, so much so that it can substitute for the hurts that would otherwise be inflicted upon sentient bodies. Because material objects are an extension of the maker's body, she claims, and the maker cannot sell what he makes, private property becomes a problem for Marx. For Scarry his key insight is that human sentience can be objectified in language and physical objects and, as such, can be socialized. Marx saw that human identity is grounded in the capacity to create. *Capital*, Scarry maintains, is an "elaborate retracing of the path along which the reciprocity of artifice has lost its way back to its human source." To redescribe Marx as the philosopher of making and the antagonist of the body's hurts, which Scarry does in painstaking detail, is a significant achievement.

The section of her work that I find troubling is her analysis of belief, and of the Judeo-Christian account of creation. For all Scarry's sensitivity to both parts of the Bible, in the end she offers what older theologians referred to as the supercessionist approach: the Hebrew Bible is an account of both God's creative and wounding acts while the New Testament, especially the Gospels, recounts Christ's healing acts, an emphasis that derives from the fact that now God is himself incarnate rather than a disembodied voice. A more balanced analysis would consider such texts from the Hebrew Bible as *Amos* with its stress on compassion for the widow and the orphan, while also showing the threat of punishment in such Gospel texts as the Son of Man's curse upon the uncharitable: "Go from my sight to the eternal fire that is ready for the devil and his angels."

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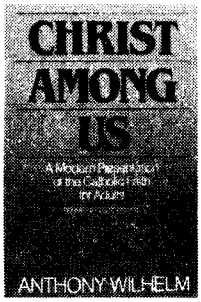

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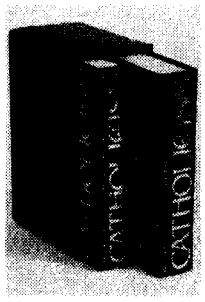

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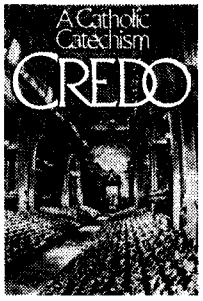

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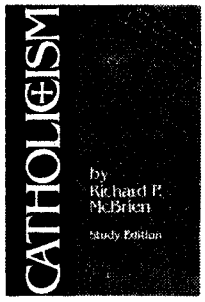

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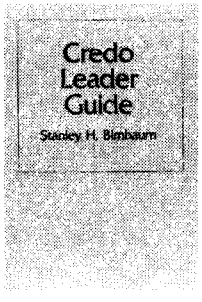

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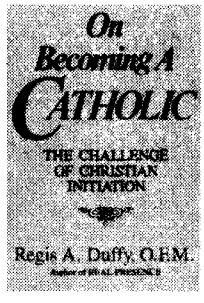

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Scarry also says that the God of the Hebrew Bible is unchanging because he has no body. But God as one of the dramatis personae of the biblical drama often exhibits changes of heart. Another difficulty is Scarry's treatment of God as himself an artifact, a fictional product of the biblical imagination. Scarry seems not to intend this as a present-day theory but as itself the position of biblical self-reflection. Thus in commenting on graven images, she mentions "the large risks taken by the scriptural mind in allowing a made thing, a fiction, God, to . . . denounce graven images on the basis that they are made things, fictions, and hence 'lies.' " As if the biblical text itself interpreted God as a fiction.

There are, however, wonderful analyses in this section of the difference between weapons and tools, between graven images and so-called "passover artifacts," salvific objects in which God is materialized as song or physical thing. The difficulties and occasional factual slips should not veil the book's importance. Like Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*, it is a driven work, part argument, part exposition, part poetry; like de Beauvoir, Scarry sets radically new terms for the discussion of her subject.

In Brief

BEYOND ANGER: *On Being a Feminist in the Church, by Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J. Paulist Press, paper $4.95, 93 pp.*

The eighty-seven pages of text which biblical scholar Carolyn Osiek, RSCJ, "had to write" deserve to be read. And not merely by the audience she specifically addresses: feminists who have decided to remain in the church where they "have found both life and death."

The book is a terse primer for the newly convinced, or never-to-be-convinced but curious, complete with the neatly staked out tenets of Christian feminism owed to scholarship. It is also a supportive reminder to those who have gone through one or more of the awareness stages Osiek describes. Still, the book offers more.

Osiek deals seriously with anger, dismissing neither its motivating force for changing what is unjust and debilitating, nor its power to overwhelm one's spiritual life with a negativity that is not only un-Christian but unhealthy. The author refuses to get bogged down in the quicksand of today's debate on women's roles within the church, and re-examines in light of the latest feminist scholarship what is at the heart of the Christian message: the cross that precedes resurrection. This is the book's primary strength. "The women of the church who have experienced the passive suffering of oppression are the only ones who are capable through their active, redemptive suffering of being the instruments of Christ to bring about the transformation and liberation of that sinful aspect of the church for the sake of all its women and its men as well . . ." Osiek writes.

The primary weakness is that Osiek overstates the oppression of women in one respect that *could* be misleading. Osiek implies that repression, not self-sacrifice, is what women end up with, in that not having achieved "a true sense of self" they are unable to deny what they have never had. To whatever extent this is true, such logic leads to the dubious conclusion that until now, saintly exceptions aside, women have not been capable of the spiritual maturity available to men. I doubt that Osiek believes this, but she doesn't guard against the reader's concluding it and being baffled, given the gist of the entire book. K S.S.

REVIEWERS

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Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.

Correspondence

(Continued from page 482)

authority, as expressed through such promising post-conciliar bodies as the National Bishops' Conference and the Priests' Senate, in favor of the more personal, highly visible, direct exercise of leadership by certain strategically placed figures like Cardinal Lustiger.

The church in France has once again become the stage upon which some of the most powerful forces of change and continuity are pitted against one another.

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However, as the revolutionary demographic changes within the universal church become increasingly felt, new ecclesial dramas are being played out in Brazil, Nigeria, and India. Their denouements may well speak more convincingly to God's people throughout the larger world than their counterparts in Western Europe and North America.

(REV.) FRANCIS J. MURPHY

The view from Paris

Paris

To the Editors: Permit a Parisian Catholic to respond to the long and interesting article on the actions of the cardinal of Paris ["The Force of Cardinal Lustiger," April 25].

Long live the solidarity of Christians!

Cardinal Lustiger is unquestionably an important man. It is recognized that he has strong objectives and determined plans. But the ordinary Parisian Catholic sees only a few nuances in his intentions and few attractions to his projects. . . .

The Parisian Catholic is afraid the American reader will form a somewhat inadequate idea of the character of French Catholics. . . .

If bishops' conferences are destined to endure, more than one French Catholic hopes that they would learn to function as the bishops' conference does in your country. When your bishops want to bring out a statement, they consult Christians and others for three years. We are far from that. The tradition of French Catholicism probably would not lead us to imitate you. And we shall doubtless regret that one day. . . .

ROBERT DE MONTVALON

An American solution

Newport, R.I.

To the Editors: Abigail McCarthy's column ["More Than Coincidence?" July 11] on destitute nuns shocked me completely. I suppose I should have known or suspected that one day the sisters, who made millions of us what we are, should fall on bad days. I am not surprised that the hierarchy has failed to act effectively. The bishops are much too busy running the world.

Let me suggest an American, if not a Roman solution. If every nun-educated American Catholic immediately contributed only ten dollars we would have a starter fund of about $200 million. Lets say "thank you, Sister," loud and clear! Not out of charity, but out of love. We owe them. It's that simple. Prelates are welcome but need not apply. This is one for America's Catholics, not for canonists or, God forbid, Archbishop Marcinkus.

DR. ROBERT F. DELANEY

In times of despair

Angola, La.

To the Editors: I am an inmate at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, where I am housed in a maximum security unit and confined to a six-foot by nine-foot cell twenty-three hours of each day. Recently I became a Christian, and life behind bars has become more bearable due to my belief in the Bible and my acceptance of God's Word. Still, the days are filled with a loneliness that cries out for contact with other individuals besides the ones confined in this prison cellblock. In my time of despair a letter from anyone would help morale and dissipate the loneliness which has become my ever present companion.

WILLIAM G. THOMPSON
108302 CCR U/B #15
Angola, Louisiana 70712

Sharing hope

Soledad, Calif.

To the Editors: This is a picture of a thirty-five-year old. He is presently in a remote public complex. He has suffered for so long and now craves to extend his hand in faith that he may share hope and good will with others. His present plight and situation force him to seek out all that have heard the calling. For those who are willing, all correspondence, postage stamps, and donations for a typewriter are welcome. Contact: Walter T. Statonel; P.O. Box 689-C-97867-E122; Soledad, CA 93960-0689.

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